Youth Congress honors community impact, looks toward next year. PAGE 2
MTEC Tourism Summit 2024 set for Jan. 24. PAGE 3

Hafa Adai!

$1

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Palacios

'We should incentivize businesses'

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Gov. Arnold I. Palacios says he is all for legally incentivizing businesses in the CNMI, including through properly vetted qualifying certificates that provides local tax abatements for an extended period of time.

See BUSINESSES on Page 4

Palacios says Dems in Cabinet will remain

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
EDITOR

A day after an announcement that he will return to the Republican Party, Gov. Arnold I. Palacios confirmed that Cabinet members who are members of the Democratic Party of the NMI will continue to serve his administration.

Staffler

Marciano

Saipan Tribune asked Palacios on social media if he plans to retain Democratic Party members in his Cabinet and he succinctly answered, "yes."

Luella Marciano, vice chairwoman of the local Democratic Party, said she has no problem continuing as Indigenous Affairs Office resident executive.

"Governor Palacios hired me, not because of my party

See DEMS on Page 4

Saipan Toys for Tots campaign exceeds expectations

By RACQUEL H. FLOYD
raxfloyd@gmail.com
CORRESPONDENT

In celebration of the 10 years of partnership with U.S. Marine Corps Base Camp Blas in the Toys for Tots campaign, the Saipan Chamber of Commerce collected an estimated 1,579 toys, 1,368 of which were from their partner companies, 423 from the Toys for Tots Foundation, and half came from the Lady Wella Foundation Toys for Tots campaign.

According to Chamber

See TOYS on Page 4

RACQUEL FLOYD
The Division of Youth Services staff segregate toys received for the the Marine Toys for Tots Foundation's Toy for Tots Campaign on Saipan last Thursday afternoon at the Division of Youth Service office in Tanapag.

RACQUEL FLOYD
Matson Inc. Navigation sponsored a vehicle for the Marine Toys for Tots Foundation's Toy for Tots Campaign on Saipan.

RACQUEL FLOYD
Mobil Oil Marianas donated $1,000 cash to the Marine Toys for Tots Foundation's Toy for Tots Campaign on Saipan.

Man arrested for allegedly threatening District Court chief judge

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

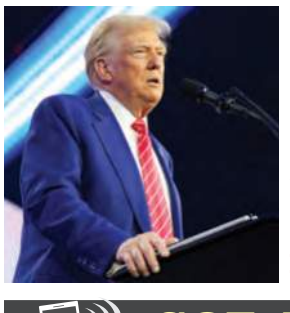
A man was arrested last week for allegedly threatening to assault and kidnap U.S. District Court for the NMI Chief Judge Ramona V. Manglona.

Last week, the District Court for the NMI executed an arrest warrant and unsealed the criminal complaint against Edward Gene Worswick Richards.

Richard is currently facing charges of threatening to assault or murder a United States judge, in violation of Title 18 U.S.C § 115(a)(1)(B), and transmitting a threat to kidnap any person or threatening to injure the person of another

See MAN on Page 4

INSIDE



NATION
President-elect Donald Trump promised on Tuesday to "vigorously pursue" capital punishment after President Joe Biden commuted the sentences of most people on federal death row partly to stop Trump from pushing forward their executions.
PAGE 9

WORLD
Bethlehem marked another somber Christmas Eve on Tuesday in the traditional birthplace of Jesus under the shadow of war in Gaza.
PAGE 10

LIFE & STYLE
Tiny tots with their eyes all aglow might be enough to brighten some homes this holiday season. But others are adorned with thousands of blinking lights synched to blasting music, drawing crowds and bolstering both holiday and community spirit.
PAGE 11

SCAN ME WITH A COMPATIBLE QR READER TO KEEP UPDATED ON ALL THE LATEST NEWS.

GOT A NEWS TIP? TEL: 235-6397 / 235-2440 FAX: 235-3740 EMAIL: editor@saipantribune.com

Local

TAGA RIDERS DONATION

The Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. Pediatrics Unit was gifted a contribution from George and Terry Camacho of the Taga Riders Motorcycle Club which contained donations of books and toys. Taga Riders was established in 1994 and this holiday season marks 30 years of commitment to giving back to the community. Taga Riders has consistently demonstrated making a meaningful impact every holiday season through their annual Christmas donations. CHCC would like to give a heartfelt thank you to Taga Riders for always spreading the joy of the holidays to our patients.

CHCC

Life is sweeter
when you
give a little love
Let's sprinkle the season with love, laughter, and a little extra cheer. As we celebrate the holidays, continue to lift each other up, create joyful moments, and spread kindness far and wide.
Together, we can make this Christmas truly unforgettable - and carry its magic into the new year.
Bank of Guam
Member FDIC

Youth Congress honors community impact, looks toward next year

JERCY DIANA MAXIMO

The 19th CNMI Youth Congress members pose for a photo after their recent session. From left, senator Ayden Sean C. Yumul (Grace Christian Academy), speaker Vinnie Juan Q. Sablan (Kagman High School), floor leader senator Maili Ilareyo'l B. Peter (Mount Carmel School), senator Jia Ross B. Nicdao, and senator Ysabella Nikonia V. Palacios (Saipan Southern High School).

By JERCY DIANA MAXIMO
jercymaximo05@gmail.com
CORRESPONDENT

The Youth Congress of the Northern Mariana Islands adopted a series of resolutions last Dec. 22 during the first day of their 11th regular session.

These resolutions recognized significant contributions and achievements within the community, emphasizing values such as service, education, and community pride.

Congress adopted the Youth Congress Resolution No. 19-27, which gave respect to the late Eliseo Diaz Cabrera, former speaker of the House of Representatives, for his legacy of selfless public service.

Furthermore, Youth Congress Resolution No. 19-28 was passed to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Diocese of Chalan Kanoa for its spiritual and cultural service to the Commonwealth.

Relating to education and civic engagement, Youth Congress Resolution No. 19-29 passed to commend participants, organizers, and winners of the 2023 and 2024 NMI Supreme Court High School Moot Court competitions.

Another resolution, Youth Congress Resolution No. 19-30, was adopted to recognize and appreciate Stephanie Diaz for her outstanding service in the fields of STEM through the 2024 Summer Step-Up Program as an exemplary model for the community.

Looking into the larger work of the Youth Congress, speaker Vinnie Juan Q. Sablan reflected on their impressive two-year term that began in 2023. "Our terms are two years, so they're actually taking applications right now for people to run for the next term," Sablan explained, noting that the current members are preparing to pass the torch to a new group of leaders.

Sablan also highlighted the productive partnerships formed during their tenure. "We've been able to work with so many of our community partners, like the coalition, the Diocese of Chalan Kanoa, and a lot of other people," he shared.

Among Congress' key initiatives were youth summits, which brought together participants from Saipan, Tinian, and Rota. "We've held youth summits that included everybody from all the three islands and everything like that," Sablan said, emphasizing the importance of these collaborative events.

Looking back, Sablan said he felt proud of the Congress as it represented and inspired young people in the CNMI: "We're just so grateful that we have an opportunity to be the voice of our youth and really engage with everybody and really inspire that positive impact.

These adopted resolutions and the culmination of this term mark the fact that the Youth Congress still serves as an avenue for empowering the youth and a means for community involvement. With new applications being accepted for the next term, it's important to make sure the future of the Youth Congress remains bright and inclusive for all the voices of the next generation of leaders in the Northern Mariana Islands.

MTEC Tourism Summit 2024 set for Jan. 24

MTEC

Students at Gregorio T. Camacho Elementary School participate in a presentation about tourism by Marianas Tourism Education Council and the Marianas Visitors Authority on Dec. 18, 2024, at the school in San Roque.

MTEC

Students at Koblerville Elementary School respond during in a presentation about tourism by Marianas Tourism Education Council and the Marianas Visitors Authority on Dec. 18, 2024, at the school in Koblerville.

The Marianas Tourism Education Council will hold its annual MTEC Tourism Summit on Jan. 24, 2025, for school MYWAVE—Marianas Youth Welcome All Visitors Enthusiastically—clubs.

This year's theme "Planting Peace—Manånånum Pås-Ffóttol llol Tipiyeew" will encourage students to understand, appreciate, and contribute to fostering peace in The Marianas.

"As we share with the students in our school presentations, one of the top considerations for travelers when choosing a destination is whether it's safe and peaceful," said MTEC chair Vicky Benavente. "Add to that the fact that most visitors to The Marianas have said – based on our last exit survey—that they're top planned activity is to enjoy nature here. This makes the theme of 'Planting Peace—Manånånum Pås- Ffóttol llol Tipiyeew' a timely topic to discuss with the students in an educational and meaningful way at the summit."

The annual summit will gather hundreds of MYWAVE Club members and chaperones at Garapan Central Park in Saipan. In addition to exhibitors, students will have the opportunity to participate in folding 1,000 origami paper cranes to commemorate 80 years of peace in 2025 since the end of World War II.

Meanwhile, MTEC and the Marianas Visitors Authority have concluded their first semester of school presentations, sharing about the tourism industry with fourth graders at two schools on Wednesday, Dec. 18.

"Going back to one of the sayings, 'Tourism is Everybody's Business,' it really helps our economy," said Gregorio T. Camacho Elementary School principal Raena Camacho in welcoming the outreach team. "If everyone is helping out, we can attract more tourists. And I think it starts young, by teaching them how important tourism is and how it's important for all of us to help out our CNMI."

The MTEC-MVA team also visited Koblerville Elementary School.

MTEC

Students at Koblerville Elementary School work together to answer questions about tourism posed by Marianas Visitors Authority Community Projects coordinator Jack Aranda. The MVA and Marianas Tourism Education Council presented at the school on Dec. 18, 2024, in Koblerville.

MTEC

Students at Gregorio T. Camacho Elementary School work together to answer questions about tourism posed by Marianas Visitors Authority Community Projects specialist Sherman Santos, right. The MVA and Marianas Tourism Education Council presented at the school on Dec. 18, 2024, in San Roque.

"They are our future generation and need to know this information to carry on not only the enhancement of tourism business but also our culture," said Koblerville Elementary School principal Naomi Nishimura. "And the earlier we start with them, that will help build that growth mindset. Even as young as they are, we value what they think and we want them to have a little understanding of what runs our economy."

For more information on MTEC, contact MVA Community Projects specialist Jack Aranda at jaranda@mymarianas.com or call (670) 664-3200/1. ***(PR)***

DIVISION OF PROCUREMENT SERVICES
CNMI GOVERNMENT
REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

RFP NO.: RFP25-BECQ/DEQ-42500025

SUBMISSION DATE: JANUARY 21, 2025
TIME: 9:00 A.M.

"TO PROVIDE FACILITATION AND LOGISTICAL COORDINATION FOR THE BIENNIAL PACIFIC ISLANDS ENVIRONMENT CONFERENCE AND PACIFIC ISLANDS ENVIRONMENT DIRECTOR'S MEETING"

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED ON THE MUNIS VENDOR ACCESS PORTAL (https://selfservice.dof.gov.mp/vss/) OR AT THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT SERVICES, LOCATED AT BLDG. NO. 12386 ASCENSION DRIVE, CAPITOL HILL, SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

QUESTIONS REGARDING THIS RFP CAN BE MADE TO MR. JUSTIN PANGELINAN, CLEAN AIR PROGRAM MANAGER AT justin.pangelinan@becq.gov.mp BY JANUARY 09, 2025, BY 4:30 P.M, ChST.

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

THE CNMI GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, OR PORTIONS THEREOF, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.

/S/ FLOYD MASGA
ACTING ADMINISTRATOR, BECQ

/S/ BRIEN S. NICHOLAS JR.
ACTING DIRECTOR, PS

COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-25-009

SEWER MAIN AND MANHOLE REPLACEMENT/REHAB/UPGRADE PHASE II

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified firms for the construction of the Sewer Main and Manhole Replacement/Rehab/Upgrade Phase II in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The project consists of realignment and replacement of the existing 4-inch bypass sewer line in **Capitol Hill Village** along **Capitol Hill Road** with a new 8-inch PVC distribution main. The scope includes the installation of appurtenances, fittings, new manholes with accessories, and the rehabilitation and reconnection of existing manholes, including the replacement of their accessories. All work must be performed in accordance with the Project Plans and Specifications, ensuring no disruption to the daily operation of the sewer system. The Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) requires the project to be completed within three hundred sixty-five (365) calendar days from the date of contract award.

The project is funded by a grant from the United States of Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). The award of this project is contingent upon receipt of approval for project award from USEPA

Prospective Bidders must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The Bid Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $200.00 (non-refundable) for one IFB package set.

A Pre-Bid Conference followed by site visits will be held on **December 23, 2024, at 10:00 AM(CHST)** at the CUC Main Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Room No.17, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building.

One (1) original and Five (5) hard copies of the bid MUST be submitted in a sealed envelope marked "**CUC-IFB-25-009, SEWER MAIN AND MANHOLE REPLACEMENT/REHAB/UPGRADE PHASE II**" to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) January 16, 2025**, at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Bids mailed via postal or courier service must be received on or before due date and time or post-marked before due date and time.

Bid shall be submitted on the provided Bid Forms. Bidders are required to complete all Bid Forms. Bidders may supplement this form as appropriate. Bids will be required to be submitted under a condition of irrevocability for a period of 60 days after submission. **Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered.**

A *Bid Guarantee* of not less than fifteen (15%) percent of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The security deposit may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. A Payment Bond of one hundred (100%) percent and a Performance Bond of one hundred (100%) percent of the total bid price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidder. The Payment and Performance bond must be executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands or otherwise secured in a manner satisfactory to CUC, for the protection of all persons supplying labor and material to the contractor or its subcontractors for the performance of the work provided for in the contract.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). Bidders are required to submit a clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.

Bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations.

This Invitation for Bids does not commit CUC to the award of a contract or contracts, nor to pay any cost incurred in the preparation and submission of bids in anticipation of a contract. Bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from registered Proponents and must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 a.m. (CHST) on December 30, 2024** to Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Officer via email address manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Joel Puyat, CUC Water/Wastewater Engineer at email joel.puyat@cucgov.org, and to Marcela Tenorio, P&S, Senior Administrative Technician at marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids and waive any imperfection in the bid proposal if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

KEVIN O. WATSON
Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

Propst grateful to animal rights groups

House floor leader Rep. Edwin K. Propst (D-Saipan), the author of the local law that guaranteed some protection to pets in the CNMI, said he's grateful to what animal rights groups have done the past several years.

"I am so grateful to the amazing people we have who on a daily basis do everything they can to help our animals, especially those helping the forgotten ones, the stray and neglected animals. I'd love to see grants supporting these non-profits like Saipan Humane Society, Boonie Babies, Saipan Cares for Animals, to name a few," he said as the CNMI joined the world in celebrating International Animal Rights Day last Dec. 10.

He added that government should look at ways to effectively enforce Public Law No. 21-31, a law that passed in 2020, "to prohibit cruelty and theft of animals."

"What we need to look at is the enforcement sections of our animal protection laws. We also need to work together in updating these laws if needed," he said.

Earlier, Saipan Humane Society executive director Guadalupe Attao said addressing the often-overlooked topic of animal cruelty in the CNMI continues to be their mission.

She said it was pretty normal for them to get cases where an animal had endured some form of abuse, whether intentionally or unintentionally inflicted.

"I guess our biggest one was Harley in February, I believe. She was on the frontpage of the newspaper. She was a part of an instance where three or four dogs in the same time all got shot by somebody or something. That month, we saw about three or four dogs hit by gunshots. Harley's sibling passed away. She had four pretty intense wounds that we were able to kind of, like, patch up. And she's alive and well now. She's still doing great. She's a sweet old lady."

Unfortunately, Attao said Harley's case wasn't the last one for the team to see. "We've seen a handful of BB bullets in cats and dogs, like in their ears, sometimes in their chest. And we've sometimes had to leave it in there or were able to take it out, assuming it was the right thing to do at that point. Today, we actually had a dog who had a gunshot wound on his back that we were able to stitch up."

She said even puppies haven't escaped the sadism of these animal cruelty perpetrators. ***(Saipan Tribune)***

TOYS

From page 1

director Kimberly Camacho, four agencies received the toys to support children and families.

"We supported four agencies that support children and families in need—Karidat Foundation, Division of Youth Services, CHCC Maternal and Child Health Services, and PSS Early Intervention Services."

Camacho added that the toys they collected exceeded the four agencies' requests.

"In total all agencies called for 1,046 toys to support their clients this holiday season and with the overage in collections, we were able to provide our agencies with additional toys, over their asking quantity. Agencies were asked to submit their client counts in November so we can create a manifest of collections as needed, however, as many are aware, most of these agencies have an on-demand service call and in times as we reach closer to the holiday season, their client list increases so we were happy to have donated additional toys to reach those families who did not make the list in the November submission," added Camacho.

Last Thursday the Toys for Tots campaign was concluded with a delivery to the last beneficiary, the Division of Youth Services.

DYS director Vivian Sablan expressed her gratitude to the Saipan Chamber of Commerce and U.S. Marine Corps Camp Blas and mentioned the 300 lists of toy recipients.

"We came up with the list based on our clients that are in the system right now that consist of the victims of child abuse and neglect under the child protective services, victims that were also once in the shelter throughout the fiscal year, but they will be placed elsewhere right now, and also our program participants at our prevention facilities, we included them," said Sablan.

Camacho highlighted her gratitude to the two major sponsors—Mobil Oil Marianas for their $1,000 cash donation and Matson Inc. Navigation, who sponsored a vehicle for them to utilize throughout the campaign duration.

"We are extremely grateful and thankful for Mobil Oil Marianas and Matson Navigation for their donations and support annually since I have been on board the Chamber, they have continued to donate and support the campaign each year in the same manner and it truly makes a difference in the success of our campaign," said Camacho.

Camacho said the Chamber would also like to thank companies that supported their campaign by allowing them to place toy donation boxes at their establishment, some partners allowed them to place monetary donation boxes at their establishment as well.

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

MAN

From page 1

in interstate or foreign commerce, in violation of Title 18 U.S.C § 875©.

During an initial appearance before District Court for the NMI designated judge Teresa Kim-Tenorio, the judge stated that threatening a federal judge carries a maximum sentence of three years and a $250,000 fine, while transmitting a threat to kidnap is punishable by up to five years in prison and a $250,000 fine.

Following the hearing, Richards was remanded back to U.S. Marshals' custody.

According to court documents, Federal Bureau of Investigation special agent Jason Oakley, in his affidavit in support of criminal complaint, stated that on Nov. 14, 2024, he was notified by deputy U.S. Marshal Samuel Sosa of a series of harassing and threatening emails sent to the U.S. Probation Office for the District of the Northern Mariana Islands.

"The emails were sent to the publicly available inbox at GUPml_NMI. Over 1,000 emails were received from doe461428@gmail.com between Nov. 10 and Nov. 17, 2024. A review of the emails revealed threats to government officials, threats to bomb Saipan, and a threat to kill United States District Judge Ramona Manglona," Oakley said.

Oakley learned that doe461428@gmail.com was using a BLU Android phone Model G71L, a prepaid wireless phone with no identified subscriber.

On Nov. 18, 2024, Oakley was again notified by the U.S. Marshals that an additional email address, scarballon@gmail.com, was sending harassing emails to GUPml_NMI with a writing style similar to that of doe461428@gmail.com with multiple references to Manglona.

Oakley learned that both email addresses came from the same device.

He said on Nov. 9, 2024, at 8:04pm, ChST, an email was sent that included the line, "This is Edward Gene Worswick Richards."

Deputy U.S. Marshal Sosa then verified that the Transportation Safety Administration's Saipan office has an employee named Edward Duane Richards who was referenced in the threat dated Nov. 10, 2024.

"On Nov. 19, 2024, Sosa interviewed TSA Officer Richards [who] indicated that [the defendant] is his nephew …. TSA Officer Richards told the investigating officers he believes [the defendant] lives with his father, Florencio Richards, and that [the defendant] suffers from mental health issues," Oakley said.

BUSINESSES

From page 1

Recently, the Commonwealth Economic Development Authority approved to recommend the issuance of a qualifying certificate to J&P Holdings (the parent company of newly established inter-island air service Micronesian Air Connections Services).

The recommendation heads up to Palacios for final review and action before it takes effect.

In an interview with Palacios, he said while he wants to remain general and neutral, he believes in incentivizing businesses, especially ones that provide crucial services for the CNMI.

"I've taken a general position But I believe we should incentivize businesses where we can, especially businesses that will provide invaluable service for the CNMI. I'm supportive of the QC but I have not seen details of the QC yet so ill hold off on giving my position on the matter," he said.

However, despite needing to review the recommendation for himself, Palacios said he is confident in CEDA's ability to vet QC applications.

"CEDA has done an extensive analysis, I believe CEDA's management is qualified, and I look forward to reviewing their recommendation hopefully before the end of the year," he said.

Last week, CEDA's decision to approve to recommend a qualifying certificate be issued to J&P Holdings was the culmination of nearly three months of review and deliberation.

In this case, CEDA approved the recommendation of a 100% tax abatement for a span of 22 years (opposed to the initial 25 years J&P Holdings applied for).

While the news was celebrated by members of the community, Star Marianas Air, Inc. has raised concerns about the approval of a QC for J&P Holdings.

According to Star Marianas, comparing MACS to the controversial Marianas Southern Airways, it is concerned that the new airline service is "seeking substantial government subsidy as a precondition to enter the market."

Specifically, Star Marianas, comparing MACS to the controversial Marianas Southern Airways, says it is concerned that the new airline service is "seeking substantial government subsidy as a precondition to enter the market."

DEMS

From page 1

affiliation, but because of my ability to do the work. Indeed, the governor put together a leadership team based not on party affiliation but on expertise, work ethic, and a shared vision for a prosperous Commonwealth."

Marciano also reiterated that she serves under the pleasure of the governor.

"It is no secret that I am a Democrat, that I am a leader in the local Democratic Party, and that I am a voting member of the Democratic National Committee. I serve at the pleasure of the governor, and should he deem my work satisfactory to his vision and his goals for the CNMI under his leadership, then I will be happy to continue serving as resident executive of the Office of Indigenous Affairs."

Like Marciano, Labor Secretary Leila Staffler said despite her being a member of the Democratic Party of the NMI, her priority remains in the service of the people of the CNMI.

My commitment to serving our community and working toward the shared democratic values of prioritizing the best interests of the people remains unwavering. I recognize the importance of collaboration and strategic positioning. Gov. Arnold I. Palacios' decision to rejoin the Republican National Committee may advance the interests of the Marianas, especially as we look ahead to the changing composition of both the Legislature and the White House. With the [CNMI-Only Transitional Worker Program] set to [expire] within the next four years, it is critical to ensure that the Marianas maintains a productive seat at the table with federal decision-makers," she said.

In a press release from the Republican National Committee last Tuesday, Palacios and governor-elect Pulaalii Nikolao Pula of American Samoa announced that they plan to join the Republican Party.

"I was elected to serve the best interests of the people of the Northern Mariana Islands above all else, and that commitment remains unwavering. It is clear to me that President Trump and the Republican Party's message of freedom, opportunity, and strength at home and on a global stage best aligns with the vision and priorities of improving the economy and creating better opportunities for every family in the Northern Marianas Islands. I look forward to working with fellow Republicans on our shared work ahead!" said Palacios

Palacios ran as an independent in 2022 with his running mate and now Lt. Gov. David M. Apatang. After finishing second in the race for governor, his ticket beat then incumbent governor Ralph DLG Torres of the CNMI Republican Party in the runoff election after Democratic Party of the Northern Marianas gubernatorial bet Tina Sablan endorsed him.

Sablan last week resigned from her post as senior policy advisor and special assistant for Climate Change & Planning to move to Hawaii.

Republican National Committee chair Michael Whatley issued the following statement: "Following President Trump's landslide victory in November, enthusiasm for the Republican Party is at historic highs and America's future is bright again. I am proud to welcome governor-elect Pula and Gov. Palacios to the Republican Party as just the latest proof that our common-sense agenda represents victory for all Americans, from the islands to the mainland."

Republican Governors Association chair and Gov. Brian Kemp issued the following statement: "Republican leadership delivers economic results, safe communities, and opportunity for all. I am proud to welcome two new Republican governors to our movement and congratulate governors Pula and Palacios on taking this bold step for their constituents."

Pula also issued the following statement: "It is clear to me that Republican Party values of respect for God, Country and Family are Samoan values. President Trump and the only GOP's ironclad commitment to reforming the federal government along with growing the economy will greatly benefit American Samoa, as we develop a partnership to build a strong economy here over the next four years."

Delegate Amata Coleman Radewagen (R-AS), the most senior member of the RNC, issued the following statement: "My job of making sure the Trump Administration pays close attention to the needs of our islands will be greatly strengthened with the backing of these two strong leaders. I have known both of them for decades."

Number of dead, missing still unclear as first aid arrives in Vanuatu

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP)—Amid the havoc wrought by a violent earthquake two days earlier, Ivan Oswald and his staff prepared for lunchtime service Thursday at Nambawan Cafe, on an idyllic stretch of Vanuatu's waterfront.

The menu for the usual lunchtime rush was replaced with defrosted sausages for emergency workers sifting through rubble in search of those trapped alive or killed in flattened buildings when the massive, 7.3 jolt hit Port Vila, Vanuatu's capital 48 hours earlier. Search crews were joined Thursday by specialists arriving in waves from Australia, New Zealand and France.

Earthquakes are normal for the South Pacific nation made up of 80 islands and home to 330,000 people, but Tuesday's terrifying shake was like nothing residents had felt before. Centered 30 kilometers (19 miles) offshore, at a depth of 57 kilometers (35 miles), the quake was followed by hundreds of rattling aftershocks.

AP

A member of Australia's Federal Police stands by a collapsed building in Port Vila, Vanuatu, Thursday, Dec. 19, 2024, following a magnitude 7.3 earthquake that struck off the coast of Vanuatu in the South Pacific Ocean, Tuesday, Dec. 17.

Death toll remains uncertain

The death toll was still unclear and official information remained scarce.

The government initially confirmed 14 deaths. Early on Friday, it said 10 had been verified by the hospital—but officials expected the number would rise. More than 200 injured people were treated, officials said, but that figure has not been updated since around early Wednesday.

Nearly 1,000 people have been displaced, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said, with that number too likely to grow.

On Thursday, telecommunications—though piecemeal and patchy—were more widely restored after a near total blackout following the quake. It offered residents of Vanuatu answers about the scale of the damage and about how many people were missing.

As word got around that Nambawan had power and an independent internet source, rescuers, tourists and locals visited to charge devices and attempt to locate their relatives.

"We've had a few tears," said Oswald, the cafe's owner. "I can't help with the rescue, but I can help with this."

Damage concentrated in the capital

The extent of the damage became clearer on Thursday. The worst-hit area was Port Vila's downtown, busy with lunchtime shoppers on Tuesday. Some outlying islands and villages near the quake's epicenter have experienced landslides.

Infrastructure damage was extensive, including to hospitals, roads, buildings, two major water reservoirs and gas pipes. Response efforts were hampered by access problems.

A massive landslide has blocked the sea port, limiting the transport of essential supplies and personnel, the UN humanitarian agency said. The airport was open only for aid flights on Thursday, but the runway has been deemed operational and the resumption of commercial services will be considered on Friday.

But risk of more serious slips loomed as rain began late Thursday night. A low pressure system moving towards Vanuatu threatened a low to medium chance of a cyclone, according to the Bureau of Meteorology, and more rain was expected in coming days.

That could prompt further landslides, erosion and floods in already vulnerable areas, officials said, as they warned those living on hillsides to evacuate. An urgent environmental assessment was needed to prevent an ecological disaster, the UN update early Friday said.

Fears over water and damage to buildings

Aid agencies told The Associated Press on Wednesday that their biggest worries were about drinking water and shelter for those unable to return home. The main utilities provider, UNELCO, said it could take two weeks to fully restore water service, according to the Vanuatu Broadcasting and Television Corporation.

The hunt for survivors and recovery of bodies centered on two collapsed buildings in the city center, with Australian search experts on Thursday joining locals who had desperately dug for people yelling out from the crumpled structures. After dramatic rescues of dust-covered survivors that lifted spirits on Tuesday and Wednesday, the mood had become bleaker about the prospects for those trapped, residents said.

It was not known how many people remained in the buildings—a garage and a surf clothing store. Among the dead was a French national, Vincent Goiset, said Jean-Baptiste Jeangène Vilmer, France's ambassador to Vanuatu.

Two Chinese nationals were also killed, Vanuatu officials said.

An economic blow

Another building housing embassies for several countries—including the United States, France and New Zealand—also crumpled, but no casualties were reported. Military flights evacuated 148 Australian nationals from Vanuatu late on Wednesday.

Hundreds more foreigners waited for commercial flights to resume so they could leave. The quake at the start of the summer season in the tourism-dependent island nation threatened an economic crisis if tourists did not return, said Glen Craig, chair of the Vanuatu Business Resilience Council.

"We've had such bad luck," said Craig, referring to the three cyclones that struck in 2023 and the collapse of Vanuatu's national airline in May. "We were just getting back on our feet and we were really looking forward to a bumper summer."

7 students from Saipan named to Bob Jones University dean's list

GREENVILLE, SC—The following students from Saipan are among approximately 720 Bob Jones University students named to the dean's list for the Fall 2024 semester.

The dean's list recognizes students who earn a 3.00-3.74 grade point average during the semester.

■ Heng Bao, a junior Kinesiology major from Saipan, was among approximately 720 Bob Jones University students named to the fall 2024 dean's list.

■ Jiye Chen, a junior physics major from Saipan, was among approximately 720 Bob Jones University students named to the fall 2024 dean's list.

■ Junyu Chen, a senior engineering major from Saipan, was among approximately 720 Bob Jones University students named to the fall 2024 dean's list.

■ Diana Dong, a sophomore accounting major from Saipan, was among approximately 720 Bob Jones University students named to the fall 2024 dean's list.

■ Yutian Luo, a sophomore computer science major from Saipan, was among approximately 720 Bob Jones University students named to the fall 2024 dean's list.

■ Jiashen Song, a junior information technology major from Saipan, was among approximately 720 Bob Jones University students named to the fall 2024 dean's list.

■ Zhenyu Zheng, a junior interior architecture and design major from Saipan, was among approximately 720 Bob Jones University students named to the fall 2024 dean's list.

Located in Greenville, South Carolina, Bob Jones University provides an outstanding regionally accredited Christian liberal arts education purposely designed to inspire a lifelong pursuit of learning, loving and leading.

BJU offers over 100 undergraduate and graduate programs in religion, education, fine arts and communication, arts and science, health professions, and business.

BJU has over 3,000 students from nearly every state and more than 40 countries. It is committed to the truth of scripture and to pursuing excellence in all it does. ***(PR)***

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)
RFP25-CHCC/CGC-002

SUBMISSION DEADLINE: JANUARY 13TH, 2025 TIME: 10:00AM (CHST)

"TINIAN OFFICE LEASE"

INTERESTED PARTIES CAN DOWNLOAD THIS **REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL** FROM THE CHCC WEBSITE [WWW.CHCC.HEALTH]. ONCE AT THE SITE, NAVIGATE TO REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS TAB ON THE LEFT NAVIGATION BAR. CLICK ON THE URL FOR THIS RFP. YOU WILL BE REQUIRED TO ENTER DATA TO ALLOW US TO TRACK ALL REQUESTS FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY.

THE CHCC RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY AND ALL PROPOSAL AND TO WAIVE ANY IMPERFECTIONS IN ANY PROPOSAL, IF TO DO SO SHALL BE IN THE INTEREST OF THE CHCC. ALL PROPOSALS SHALL BECOME THE EXCLUSIVE PROPERTY OF THE COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION.

/S/ ESTHER L. MUNA
CHCC CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

/S/ CORA P. ADA
DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT & SUPPLY

COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION
Office of the Executive Director

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
CUC-RFP-25-010
FINANCIAL AND COMPLIANCE AUDIT FOR FISCAL YEAR ENDING SEPTEMBER 30, 2025, 2026 & 2027

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) requires the services of a U.S. Certified Public Accounting Firm/Individual with knowledge, skill, and experience in auditing (1) financial statements in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles and auditing standards of the U.S. and; (2) federal awards programs in accordance with the Single Audit Act and U.S. Office of Management and Budget requisites

- Provide assistance to the CUC management with the preparation of the annual financial statements in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America
- Ensure that the financial statements and auditor's reports also meet any specific requirements contained in agreements or other contractual requirements relative to financial statement presentation and the audits.
- Submit the draft financial statements and accompanying auditor's reports to CUC management no later than January 31st of each year, and issue the final reports no later than February 28th of each year.
- Provide 15 bound copies of the final financial statements and accompanying auditor's report
- Provide an electronic copy (e.g., .pdf format) of the final report to the CUC.

Auditors are responsible to review the 2025, 2026 & 2027 financial statements to include the physical CUC assets for each fiscal year.

The RFP package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $100.00 for one RFP package set.

One (1) original and five (5) hard copies, along with an electronic copy of the proposal on a compact disk in PDF format must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked ***"CUC-RFP-25-010, Financial and Compliance Audit for Fiscal Year Ending September 30, 2025, 2026 & 2027"*** to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, no later than **January 10, 2025 at 10:00 AM** (ChST). Submissions, in PDF, must also be emailed to the addresses as noted in the RFP. Late submissions and conditional proposals will not be considered.

Discussions may be conducted with responsible offerors who submit proposals determined to be reasonably susceptible of being selected for award for the purpose of clarification and to ensure full understanding of and responsiveness to solicitation requirements. Offerors shall be accorded fair and equal treatment with respect to any opportunity to discussion and revision of proposals, and such revision may be permitted after submission and prior to award for the purpose of obtaining the best and final offers. During discussions, there will be no disclosure of any information derived from proposals submitted by competing offerors.

All Offeror are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the Offeror due to lack of information or understanding of the proposal requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a proposal or supply under the contract. The RFP does not commit CUC to award a contract, to pay any cost incurred in the preparation of the proposal under this request, or to procure or contract for services. Offeror are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed as per the CUC Procurement Regulations.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from pre-registered prospective proposers and must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on December 20, 2024** to Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator, via email address manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Betty G. Terlaje, CUC Chief Financial Officer, via email address betty.terlaje@cucgov.org,, Rodolfo Urbano, CUC Chief Accountant via email, rodolfo.urbano@cucgov.org and Marcela Tenorio, via email address, marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all proposals for any reason and to waive any defects in said proposal, if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All proposals shall become the property of CUC.

KEVIN O. WATSON
Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
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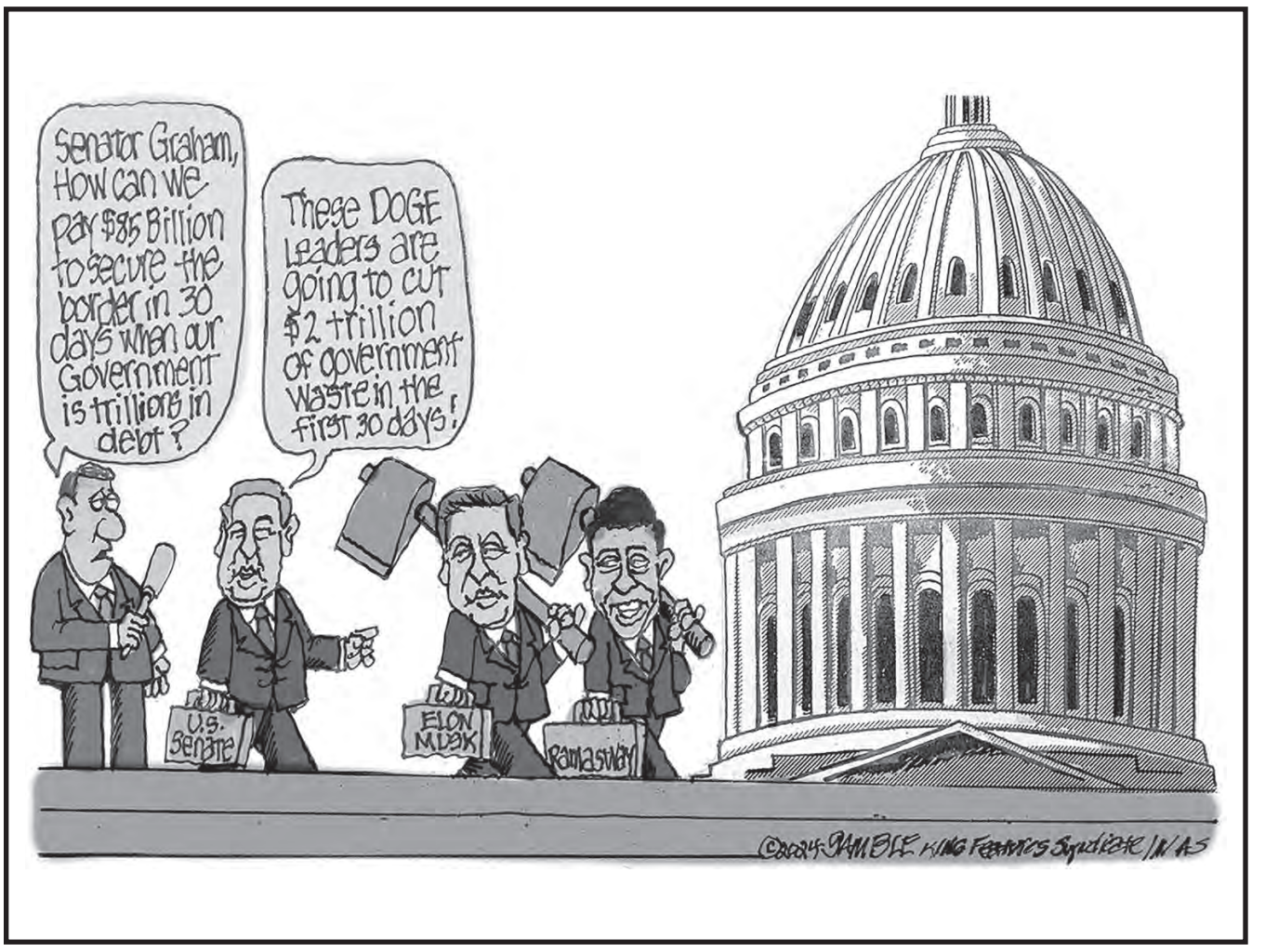
Pacific Islands News Association


Senator Graham, How can we pay $85 Billion to secure the border in 30 days when our Government is trillions in debt?
These DOGE Leaders are going to cut $2 trillion of government waste in the first 30 days!
U.S. Senate
ELON MUSK
RAMASWAMY
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EDITORIAL

IRS cuts make Uncle Sam lose money—Reducing the enforcement budget is bad policy

No one loves the Internal Revenue Service, but we need the much-maligned agency having enough resources to make sure that everyone pays their fair share of taxes to support Uncle Sam and Republicans should not slash that funding.

For a brief moment, the IRS had the full breadth of resources it needed to investigate wealthy tax cheats, courtesy of President Joe Biden's Inflation Reduction Act.

Now, most of this funding, exceeding $40 billion, is at risk in a proposed continuing resolution to keep the government open. This is a loss for fiscal responsibility.

Republicans describe these cuts as "savings," but every analysis shows a significant revenue drop for the federal government.

Every serious study of the effect IRS funding levels have on receipts shows that the increased tax revenues they generate far outstrip the initial spend, i.e. spending more on the IRS always brings in more money.

It's also not money that's coming out of already-stretched families' pockets, as the fear mongers would have you believe. If anything, the opposite is true, as the IRS has used a chunk of the additional cash to improve services for taxpayers, hiring additional customer service personnel and modernizing systems to help people navigate the sometimes byzantine agency.

The additional enforcement capacity this funding allows was never intended to and has not targeted the vast majority of U.S. taxpayers, with the agency having said from the get-go that audits would not increase for people earning under $400,000 annually.

Instead, the agency has specifically focused on very high net worth individuals and large companies, with an emphasis on those who've not been timely filing taxes or otherwise draw particular scrutiny in ways the agency simply hasn't had the resources to fully investigate.

Even just this past fiscal year, the agency secured some $25 billion in additional revenue from audits as compared to the year before, and it estimated it could collect up to $561 billion more over the next 10 years. This isn't some abstraction, this is real money that can be used to fix bridges, keep Medicare solvent, support housing development and financing, respond to health emergencies and natural disasters and so on.

The fantasy that some political actors painted of armed IRS agents going door-to-door clawing away families' hard-earned cash obviously never materialized, yet Republicans are coming after the funding anyway, because ultimately they have a powerful constituency of moneyed interests to protect.

They're getting this goal in part due to their own inability

See IRS on Page 7

Why I'm getting rid of my smartwatch

By CATE TWINING-WARD
Los Angeles Times

Cate Twining-Ward is a climate policy consultant in New York City

The first thing I do each morning is check my watch—not for the time but for my sleep score.

As a runner, when the glowing red letters say my score—and my training readiness—are poor, I feel an instant dread. Regardless, I scroll on, inspecting my heart rate variability and stress level—snapshots that influence the tone I carry into the day.

What does dreading my smartwatch's interpretation of my athletic competence say about me? That I have become a pawn in the gamification of health data.

Last year, electronics represented one of the largest proportions of total Black Friday sales, according to Deloitte. That's when I bought my first smartwatch, a Garmin.

This year, I'm throwing it away.

I was the perfect target. For several years, I had been preparing to run my first marathon. I watched fitness influencers, ultramarathoners and Olympians optimize their training with meticulous tracking and high-tech devices. I wanted in. I got the watch and joined Strava, a social media network for athletes.

Once I had a tracker on, sleep became sacred. I traded late-night socializing for it, confident that I'd cash in on race day. I built my day around my nights, transfixed by a false sense of control over my circadian rhythm.

Sleep, just like my running routine, had slowly morphed from a bodily function into a technological token of productivity.

I was hooked, emboldened by the illusion that I was training intuitively. I pushed hard when my Garmin nudged me, and even harder when I wanted to prove its metrics wrong. I began to run more for the PR (personal record) badge and "your fastest 5k!" notifications than for mental clarity and solitude.

I ran because I loved it, and because I loved it, I fell prey to the Strava-fication of it. Suddenly, I was no longer running for myself. I was running for public consumption.

I realized this only when it literally became painfully obvious. An MRI found that the lingering pain I'd been ignoring in my heels—something my watch hadn't picked up on—was caused by four running-induced stress fractures.

Recovering from the injury forced me to be sedentary, and during that time I've thought a lot about the app-ification of exercise culture.

I've realized that health optimization tools—the ones marketed as necessary for better sleep, a lower resting heart rate, higher VO2 max (a measure of how much oxygen your body absorbs) and so on—are designed to profit off our fitness anxiety. We track ourselves this way and that way, obsessing over our shortcomings to no apparent end. In doing so, we are deprogrammed from listening to innate physiological signals and reprogrammed to create shadow experiences such as posting our detailed workout stats or running paths on digital walls that no one is looking at.

I've also learned that if you stop tracking, you will feel marginally but measurably better.

I don't deny that today's fitness gadgets are incredibly alluring, and in many ways tracking can be useful for training. I am convinced, however, that overreliance on the data collected by devices and apps—and the comparisons we draw from sharing it—can quickly corrupt and commodify what I find to be the true essence of running: being present.

When we aren't tracking, when we are just doing, we can begin to reap the dull yet profound psychological benefits of endurance sports—the repetitive silence, the consistent failure—that can't be captured in a post or monetized.

And when we endure the mundane and difficult aspects of a sport, over and over, we often make gains that are mindful as well as physical, becoming more aware of how and what we pay attention to. This is no small task. It takes discipline to remain aware, present and undistracted.

Exercise is a rare opportunity to allow our bodies' movement to color our thoughts from one minute to the next. When we're in motion, we don't need to analyze our health metrics. We can learn to accept the moment and be humbled by our limitations.

Gift-giving season will attempt to convince you that you need devices to make your exercise more effective and efficient. There will be bright and beautiful advertisements featuring famous athletes. There will be a sleeker smartwatch and a cutting-edge GPS tracking shoe sole like that one Instagram keeps showing you. Be skeptical.

Freeing yourself, even temporarily, from the smartwatch or smartphone or smart-fill-in-the-blank that is tracking your every move is a challenge worth taking on. Because every walk or run or ride is a new story, and without fitness devices the path remains ours to choose.

EDITORIAL POLICY Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

How we got to 'your body, my choice' from #MeToo

By FRANCIS WILKINSON
Bloomberg Opinion

Francis Wilkinson is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist covering U.S, politics and policy. Previously, he was executive editor for the Week and a writer for Rolling Stone.

President-elect Donald Trump received more than 77 million votes after having been held liable by a jury for sexual abuse in a civil case. (His previous election victory, in 2016, followed the release of a tape in which he bragged about groping women.)

In turn, Trump has nominated men for some of the most important positions in government—including secretary of defense—who've also been accused of sexual assault. Meanwhile, a long list of Trump hangers-on have also faced alarming accusations. Although they deny the charges—and Trump excused his own comments as "locker-room talk"—the pattern of elevating accused sexual aggressors is clear. Meanwhile, for the first time in two decades, there will be no female committee chairs in the next GOP-controlled Congress.

To analyze all this, I spoke by telephone and email with Cynthia Miller-Idriss, director of the Polarization and Extremism Research & Innovation Lab at American University and author of Hate in the Homeland: The New Global Far Right. Her new book, Man Up: The New Misogyny and the Rise of Violent Extremism, is scheduled for publication by Princeton University Press in September 2025. Our conversation has been edited for concision and clarity.

Francis Wilkinson: Dr. Millier-Idriss, can you help us understand how we got here?

Cynthia Miller-Idriss: Trump's comments about groping women go back years before his first presidency. But previously he partnered with somebody like (former Vice President) Mike Pence, who was sort of in the other direction, of benevolent sexism, saying he would refuse to have dinner with a woman who wasn't his wife.

What's happened since is this widening ecosystem of the manosphere, helped along by people like Trump. It includes influencers like self-proclaimed misogynist Andrew Tate, who sell the exploitation of women for their own profits, selling a package of beliefs that include hierarchies of superiority and inferiority among men and women.

FW: How has manosphere content become so influential?

CMI: A report from Dublin City University in Ireland earlier this year showed how quickly sock puppet accounts purporting to be 16- and 18-year-old boys encounter manosphere content even when they are only seeking content about sports, video games or gyms. For 16-year-old boys, it takes less than 9 minutes on Tik Tok or 17 minutes on YouTube Shorts. If the sock-puppet account watched the (manosphere) content, then the vast majority of subsequent content directed at the sock puppet began to be manosphere content.

What we're seeing normalizes anti-feminist content, entitlement to women's bodies, their service, their sexual favors. We've had a complete normalization of egregiously bad behavior that people would've been fired for in the past. Not only is that not happening, but people are being rewarded for it.

FW: Why has this content found such fertile ground?

CMI: There are real challenges to masculinity in a world where many men, especially men without college educations, are falling behind. I don't think Democrats have done a particularly good job of messaging to men and boys about these issues, about how they're in crisis.

Masculinity is the last bastion of rigidity: We haven't made the cultural definitions of manhood more flexible. A study I read over the summer found that high school boys in the U.S. increasingly accept same-sex relationships among boys, but you have to be bro about it. It's OK to be gay, but it's not OK to be effeminate or flamboyant. And that is fascinating to me. Sexuality has become fluid, but God forbid we challenge masculinity.

FW: MAGA has very rigid feminine standards, as well. There's a very distinct Trump Woman.

CMI: Absolutely. Women are expected to look a certain way. They have long hair; there's a very specific kind of makeup and fillers and slenderness. Trump has made comments about women's bodies and their attractiveness that we, as a society, somehow keep looking past.

You also have this "trad wife" surge online of women promoting a submissive relationship with a husband, which, of course, is also very White. Who were the maids enabling that 1950s lifestyle? Immigrants and women of color didn't have "trad wife" experiences. Nor did men who were immigrants or men of color.

FW: The #MeToo phenomenon, in which powerful men were brought low and even jailed for sexual abuse, seems to have been a moment rather than a movement. What happened?

CMI: There's a clear backlash against #MeToo, even in the form of men lamenting that strictures on behavior are so severe that they "can't even flirt anymore." That backlash is not only directed against norms against sexual harassment and assault, it's a more generalized backlash against progress and visibility in women's and LGBTQ+ rights and the gendered social changes that are part of the culture war. Hundreds of legislative bills have been introduced across the country targeting women's reproductive rights or policing trans people's health care and access to bathrooms or sports-team participation.

FW: The presidential election accelerated that backlash. Immediately after the election, we had a proliferation—both online and in middle schools and high schools—of boys and men saying, "Your body, my choice." I heard from a woman in Chicago who said her colleague had been accosted by a young man on public transit who told her, "It took your mother 9 months to make you, it'll take me 30 seconds to take you."

CMI: Even elementary school boys. I got a flurry of messages from moms telling me what their daughters had been experiencing. The election absolutely cemented for some boys and young men a celebratory surge of reclaiming power and ownership over women and girls and their bodies—men are back on top.

Nick Fuentes, who's a white supremacist, issued a tweet on election night that said, "Your body, my choice. Forever." It has been viewed nearly 100 million times. The Institute for Strategic Dialogue tracked a 4,600% increase in the use of "Your body, my choice" and "Go back to the kitchen" on X in the 24 hours following the election. A 13-year-old girl in Maryland was in the hallway of a school and a boy said to her, "Go put on your Handmaid's dress." A college student was physically grabbed on her butt at a coffee shop and when she turned around, the guy said, "We can do that now."

There are a lot of things I'm worried about with this. Normalization is one, potential violence is another.

FW: How does sexual aggression relate to political violence?

CMI: There's a connection between misogynistic or hostile sexism beliefs and support for, or willingness to engage in, political violence. In several surveys across multiple countries, hostile sexism, misogyny, and beliefs about the subordination of women are substantial and significant predictors of support for political violence or willingness to engage in it.

You can't help but notice that almost every perpetrator of a mass shooting has a history of harassment, stalking or rape threats, or domestic or intimate-partner violence. The Uvalde, Texas, elementary school shooter, for example, had been making rape, kidnapping and murder threats against teen girls online. The man who killed 32 people at Virginia Tech in 2007 had two prior reports of stalking against women students. The examples seem endless.

FW: At the same time, only part of America wants to go backward. A roughly equal part has proved comfortable with Barack Obama or Hillary Clinton or Kamala Harris. Is the country in for a long trench war?

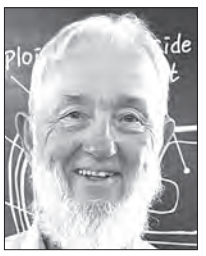
CMI: I think we are. You have this online world, and this normalization happening from political leaders like Trump, but you also have root causes that have to be addressed. I think humiliating boys or men or telling them they're bad actors is not the solution. Because then these misogynistic messages become attractive. Gen Z men are less likely than millennial men to support feminism or women's rights. And that's incredible to me. That a lot of this anger is situated in younger men is really important to understand and to think about. How do we reach those men differently?

Between the Immensities: Nostalgic Nöel Night News–Year 2018

LITERARY NOOK

By JOEY CONNOLLY
Special to the Saipan Tribune

Joey Connolly aka "Pepe Batbon" is a retired educator who taught in the CNMI, NOLA, and LVNV. He is the Poet Laureate of Tinian and enjoys stargazing.



Tinian moonlight memories

(Nighttime southeast cliff notes)

The moon reflects on the calm water
lighting the waves but it never gets wet
it is the sun's loving darling daughter
oceans use its changes - all they can get.
The moon lights up clouds in the sky
icy circles surrounding it are reflected
on tropic nights when looking up high
cool winds from the north are expected.
Tonight, I reflect on loved ones passing
from my family and many lifelong friends
comforted by moonlight reflecting sunlight
knowing the birth to death cycle never ends.
Soft raindrops on my face, more coming soon
mix with teardrops under a changing moon.

Sirius the dog star sings—hmm? a 'hymn'

(On constellation Canis Major, Year of the Dog 2018)

On the cliffs high above the ocean
starlight shines over Pacific calm
the Milky Way divides the sky
above my head hangs Orion's bell
planets rise slowly in the East
on Mother Earth's spinning wheel
viewed from northern Long Beach
on many clear nights across the reef
Jupiter shines on the tranquil water
tonight it is clear and is easy to see
typhoon season is coming real soon
fresh water springs bubble near shore
a winter hexagram of bright stars
frames Betelgeuse on Orion's shoulder
in the Big Dog constellation Sirius sings.

IRS

From page 6

to negotiate a budget, as these are concessions that Democrats made in order to avoid a government shutdown.

For their part, Democrats might have considered this kind of a moot issue with the incoming Trump administration and a GOP-controlled House and Senate — why fight for something that the Republicans are just going to take out in a month?

Perhaps, but we wouldn't be so sure; Speaker Mike Johnson will be heading into the next session with about as slim of a majority as is possible. The defection of just a handful in his ranks will tank the chance of a controversial bill passing, and we have to imagine there are at least a few Republican lawmakers who understand this to be pure form over substance in a way that will ultimately hurt and not help taxpayers.

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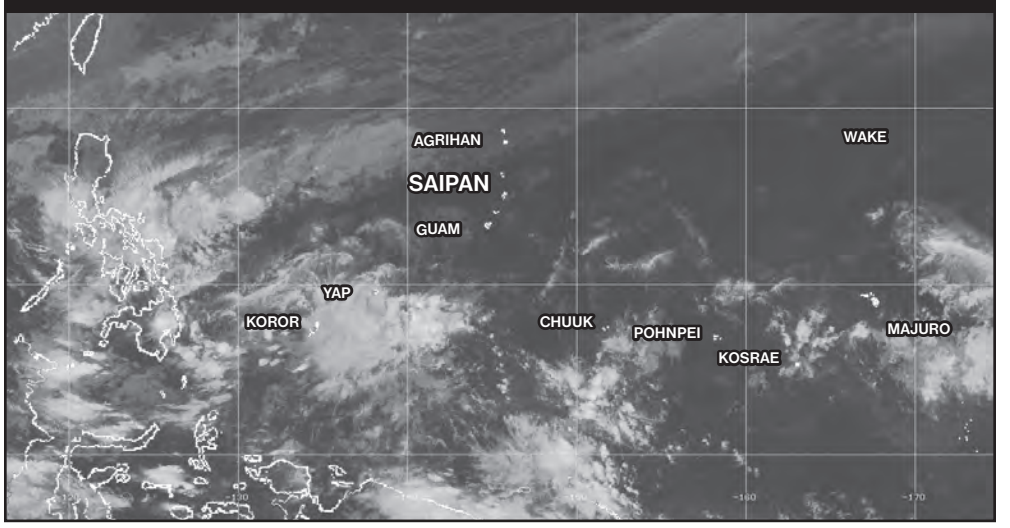
The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY
Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 15 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 15 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.	Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.	Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.
86° 77°	86° 77°	86° 77°	86° 77°	86° 77°

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 3:32 AM WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 25, 2024

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Not much change with the zone forecast for the Marianas. Showers could approach scattered in coverage at times today, especially near Rota. However, areas of higher QPF are forecasted to be highly localized and PoPs were kept at 20% as a result. The latest buoy and altimetry data indicate combined seas of 6 to 9 feet. A large northerly swell has started to enter the region with altimetry and buoy data showing 9 to 11 foot seas across the far northern Marianas. A High Surf Advisory was issued for west and north facing reefs. Conditions could become hazardous to small craft tonight or Thursday, especially across the CNMI. Nonetheless, choppy seas appear likely through Friday. Mariners are advised to exercise caution when out on the water.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: https://www.weather.gov/gum/

MICRONESIA	▲ ▼ °F	
Guam and Rota	Partly Cloudy	86° / 79°
Palau	Cloudy	87° / 78°
Yap	Mostly Cloudy	86° / 79°
Chuuk	Light Rain Shower	85° / 80°
Pohnpei	Mostly Cloudy	86° / 78°
Kosrae	Mostly Cloudy	86° / 78°
Majuro	Partly Cloudy	85° / 80°

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:40 AM	5:54 PM
Friday	6:41 AM	5:55 PM
Saturday	6:41 AM	5:55 PM
Sunday	6:41 AM	5:56 PM
Monday	6:42 AM	5:56 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	2:19 AM	2:01 PM	-
Friday	3:09 AM	2:41 PM	-
Saturday	4:02 AM	3:26 PM	-
Sunday	4:57 AM	4:16 PM	-
Monday	5:54 AM	5:12 PM	-

AROUND THE GLOBE	▲ ▼ °F	
Auckland	Partly Cloudy	75° / 63°
Beijing	Partly Cloudy	43° / 21°
Hong Kong	Mostly Sunny	73° / 63°
Honolulu	Mostly Sunny	79° / 64°
London	Showers	55° / 34°
Los Angeles	Sunny	78° / 50°
Manila	Partly Cloudy	90° / 75°
Melbourne	Rain	73° / 52°
Miami	Mostly Sunny	81° / 72°
New York	Partly Cloudy	50° / 34°
Osaka	Mostly Sunny	55° / 45°
Paris	Partly Cloudy	43° / 36°
Busan	Mostly Sunny	54° / 30°
Rome	Sunny	57° / 41°
Salem	Cloudy	52° / 39°
San Francisco	Sunny	60° / 45°
Seoul	Mostly Sunny	39° / 19°
Tokyo	Mostly Sunny	54° / 39°
Washington, DC	Partly Cloudy	48° / 33°

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		FEET
5:35 AM	High Tide	1.20
9:55 AM	Low Tide	0.94
3:40 PM	High Tide	1.55
11:16 PM	Low Tide	-0.06

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF DECEMBER 1, 2024

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA076	9:50AM	10:35AM	Daily

SAIPAN- NARITA (NRT)

UA824	1:20PM	4:00PM	1, 3, 5

GUAM-MANILA (MNL)

PR 111	5:55AM	7:55AM	Daily
UA183	7:55PM	9:50PM	Daily
UA193	7:55PM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Palau

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

7C3218/2305	2:45AM	10:20PM	Daily via Incheon
UA076/183 Guam	9:50AM	9:50PM	Daily via
UA076/193	9:50AM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Guam, Palau

SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)

TW308	2:30AM	6:25AM	Daily
7C3218	2:45AM	6:45AM	Daily from Dec 8
7C3212	4:35PM	8:25PM	Daily

SAIPAN-BUSAN (PUS)

7C3552	3:55AM	7:20AM	3, 6 from Dec 25

SAIPAN-HONG KONG (HKG)

HX77	3:05AM	5:55AM	1, 5

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA174	8:00AM	8:45AM	Daily

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

UA825	5:30PM	10:05PM	2, 4, 7

MANILA (MNL)-GUAM

UA156	00:40AM	6:25AM	3, 6
PR110	10:05PM	3:55AM+1	Daily
UA192	10:40PM	6:30AM+1	2, 5 via Palau
UA184	10:55PM	4:40AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA156	00:40AM	8:45AM	3, 6 via Guam
UA192/174	10:40PM	8:45AM+1	2, 5 via Palau, Guam
UA184/174	10:55PM	8:45AM +1	1, 3, 4, 6,7 via Guam
7C2306/3407	11:20PM	3:30PM+1	Daily

INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN

7C3211	10:10AM	3:30PM	Daily
TW307	8:00PM	1:30AM+1	Daily
7C3217	8:10PM	1:40AM+1	Daily from Dec 8

BUSAN (PUS)-SAIPAN

7C3551	9:25PM	2:50AM+1	2, 5 from Dec 25

HONG KONG (HKG)-SAIPAN

HX76	6:25PM	1:35AM+1	4, 7

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JANUARY 2, 2024

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1301	SAIPAN	ROTA	08:30	09:00	Daily
1302	SAIPAN	ROTA	10:30	11:00	Daily
1303	SAIPAN	ROTA	15:30	16:00	Daily

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3101	ROTA	SAIPAN	9:30	10:00	Daily
3102	ROTA	SAIPAN	11:30	12:00	Saturday & Sunday
3103	ROTA	SAIPAN	13:30	14:00	Monday To Friday
3104	ROTA	SAIPAN	16:30	17:00	Daily

ROTA TO GUAM

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3401	ROTA	GUAM	11:30	12:00	Monday To Friday

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
4301	GUAM	ROTA	12:30	13:00	Monday To Friday

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1201	SAIPAN	TINIAN	7:30	7:45	Daily
1202	SAIPAN	TINIAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	SAIPAN	TINIAN	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	SAIPAN	TINIAN	10:00	10:15	Daily
1206	SAIPAN	TINIAN	14:00	14:15	Daily
1207	SAIPAN	TINIAN	15:00	15:15	Daily
1208	SAIPAN	TINIAN	16:00	16:15	Daily
1209	SAIPAN	TINIAN	17:00	17:15	Daily

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
2101	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
2102	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	TINIAN	SAIPAN	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	TINIAN	SAIPAN	10:30	10:45	Daily
2106	TINIAN	SAIPAN	14:30	14:45	Daily
2107	TINIAN	SAIPAN	15:30	15:45	Daily
2108	TINIAN	SAIPAN	16:30	16:45	Daily
2109	TINIAN	SAIPAN	17:30	17:45	Daily

Nation

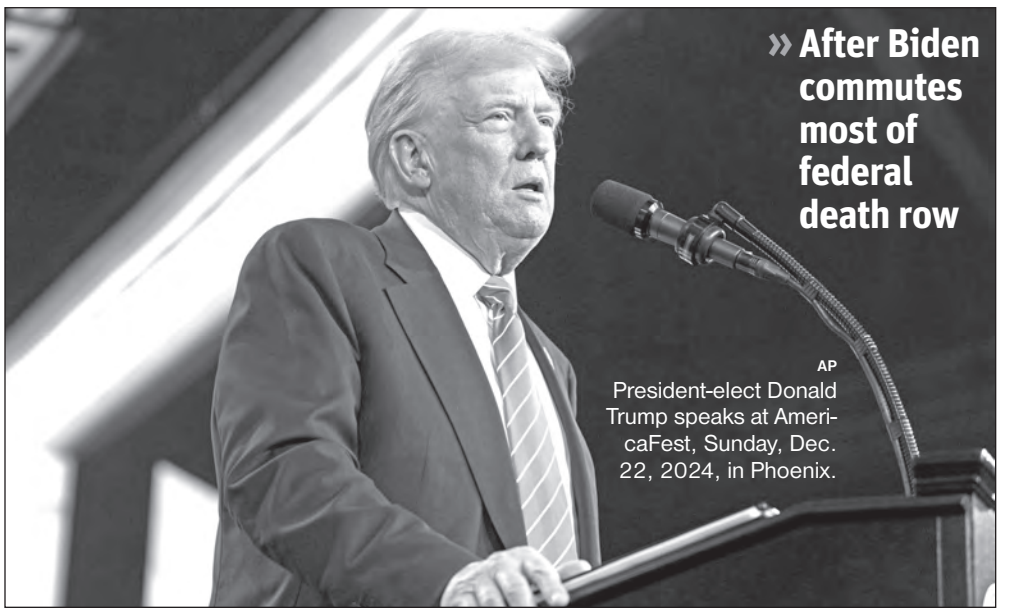
President-elect Trump vows to pursue executions

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (AP)—President-elect Donald Trump promised on Tuesday to "vigorously pursue" capital punishment after President Joe Biden commuted the sentences of most people on federal death row partly to stop Trump from pushing forward their executions.

Trump criticized Biden's decision on Monday to change the sentences of 37 of the 40 condemned people to life in prison without parole, arguing that it was senseless and insulted the families of their victims. Biden said converting their punishments to life imprisonment was consistent with the moratorium imposed on federal executions in cases other than terrorism and hate-motivated mass murder.

"Joe Biden just commuted the Death Sentence on 37 of the worst killers in our Country," he wrote on his social media site. "When you hear the acts of each, you won't believe that he did this. Makes no sense. Relatives and friends are further devastated. They can't believe this is happening!"

Presidents historically have no involvement in dictating or recommending the punishments that federal prosecutors seek for defendants in criminal cases, though Trump has long sought more direct control over the Justice Department's operations. The president-elect wrote that he would direct the department to pursue the death penalty "as soon as I am inaugurated," but was vague on what specific actions he may take and said they would be in cases of "violent rapists, murderers, and monsters."



» After Biden commutes most of federal death row

AP
President-elect Donald Trump speaks at AmericaFest, Sunday, Dec. 22, 2024, in Phoenix.

He highlighted the cases of two men who were on federal death row for slaying a woman and a girl, had admitted to killing more and had their sentences commuted by Biden.

Is it a plan in motion or more rhetoric?

On the campaign trail, Trump often called for expanding the federal death penalty—including for those who kill police officers, those convicted of drug and human trafficking, and migrants who kill U.S. citizens.

"Trump has been fairly consistent in wanting to sort of say that he thinks the death penalty is an important tool and he wants to use it," said Douglas Berman, an expert on sentencing at Ohio State University's law school. "But whether practically any of that can happen, either under existing law or other laws, is a heavy lift."

Berman said Trump's statement at this point seems to be just a response to Biden's commutation.

"I'm inclined to think it's still in sort of more the rhetoric phase. Just, 'don't worry. The new sheriff is coming. I like the death penalty,'" he said.

Most Americans have historically supported the death penalty for people convicted of murder, according to decades of annual polling by Gallup, but support has declined over the past few decades. About half of Americans were in favor in an October poll, while roughly 7 in 10 Americans backed capital punishment for murderers in 2007.

Death row inmates are mostly sentenced by states

Before Biden's commutation, there were 40 federal death row inmates compared with more than 2,000 who have been sentenced to death by states.

"The reality is all of these crimes are typically handled by the states," Berman said.

A question is whether the Trump administration would try to take over some state murder cases, such as those related to drug trafficking or smuggling. He could also attempt to take cases from states that have abolished the death penalty.

Could rape now be punishable by death?

Berman said Trump's statement, along with some recent actions by states, may present an effort to get the Supreme Court to reconsider a precedent that considers the death penalty disproportionate punishment for rape.

"That would literally take decades to unfold. It's not something that is going to happen overnight," Berman said.

Before one of Trump's rallies on Aug. 20, his prepared remarks released to the media said he would announce he would ask for the death penalty for child rapists and child traffickers. But Trump never delivered the line.

What were the cases highlighted by Trump?

One of the men Trump highlighted on Tuesday was ex-Marine Jorge Avila Torrez, who was sentenced to death for killing a sailor in Virginia and later pleaded guilty to the fatal stabbing of an 8-year-old and a 9-year-old girl in a suburban Chicago park several years before.

The other man, Thomas Steven Sanders, was sentenced to death for the kidnapping and slaying of a 12-year-old girl in Louisiana, days after shooting the girl's mother in a wildlife park in Arizona. Court records show he admitted to both killings.

Some families of victims expressed anger with Biden's decision, but the president had faced pressure from advocacy groups urging him to make it more difficult for Trump to increase the use of capital punishment for federal inmates. The ACLU and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops were some of the groups that applauded the decision.

Biden left three federal inmates to face execution. They are Dylann Roof, who carried out the 2015 racist slayings of nine Black members of Mother Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina; 2013 Boston Marathon bomber Dzhokhar Tsarnaev; and Robert Bowers, who fatally shot 11 congregants at Pittsburgh's Tree of Life Synagogue in 2018, the deadliest antisemitic attack in U.S history.

Heavy travel day starts with brief grounding of all American Airlines flights

WASHINGTON (AP)—American Airlines briefly grounded flights nationwide Tuesday because of a technical problem just as the Christmas travel season kicked into overdrive and winter weather threatened more potential problems for those planning to fly or drive.

Government regulators cleared American flights to get airborne about an hour after the Federal Aviation Administration ordered a national ground stop for the airline. The order, which prevented planes from taking off, was issued at the airline's request after it experienced trouble with its flight operating system, or FOS. The airline blamed technology from one of its vendors.

As a result, flights were delayed across American's major hubs, with only 36% of the airline's 3,901 domestic and international flights leaving on time, according to Cirium, an aviation analytics company. Fifty-one flights were canceled.

Dennis Tajer, a spokesperson for the Allied Pilots Association, a union representing American Airlines pilots, said the airline told pilots at 7 a.m. Eastern that there was an outage affecting the FOS system. It handles different types of airline operations, including dispatch, flight planning, passenger boarding, as well as an airplane's weight and balance data, he said.

Some components of FOS have gone down in the past, but a systemwide outage is rare, Tajer said.

Hours after the ground stop was lifted, Tajer said the union had not heard about any "chaos out there beyond just the normal heavy travel day." He said officials were watching for any cascading effects, such as staffing problems.

On social media, however, customers expressed frustration with delays that caused them or their family members to miss connecting flights. One person asked if American planned to hold flights for passengers to make connections, while others complained about the lack of assistance they said they received from the airline or gate agents.

Bobby Tighe, a real estate agent from Florida, said he will miss a family Christmas Eve party in New York because his American flight was repeatedly delayed. The delays made him miss a connecting flight, leaving him the choice of going to his destination—Westchester, New York—on Christmas Day or taking another flight to Newark, New Jersey, that was scheduled to land Tuesday evening. He chose the latter.

"I'm just going to take an Uber or Lyft to the airport I was originally supposed to go to, pick up my rental car and kind of restart everything tomorrow," Tighe said. He said his girlfriend was "going through the same exact situation" on her way from Dallas to New York.

Cirium noted that the vast majority of flights were departing within two hours of their scheduled departure time. A similar percentage—39%—were arriving at their destinations as scheduled.

Dallas-Fort Worth, New York's Kennedy Airport and Charlotte, North Carolina, saw the greatest number of delays, Cirium said. Washington, Chicago and Miami experienced considerably fewer delays.

ACROSS THE NATION

Biden signs a bill officially making the bald eagle the national bird of the US

WASHINGTON (AP)—The bald eagle, a symbol of the power and strength of the United States for more than 240 years, earned an overdue honor on Tuesday: It officially became the country's national bird. President Joe Biden signed into law legislation sent to him by Congress that amends the United States Code to correct what had long gone unnoticed and designate the bald eagle—familiar to many because of its white head, yellow beak and brown body—as the national bird. The bald eagle has appeared on the Great Seal of the United States, which is used in official documents, since 1782, when the design was finalized. The seal is made up of the eagle, an olive branch, arrows, a flag-like shield, the motto "E Pluribus Unum" and a constellation of stars. Congress that same year designated the bald eagle as the the national emblem, and its image appears in a host of places, ranging from documents and the presidential flag to military insignia and U.S. currency, according to USA.gov. But it had never been officially designated to be what many had just assumed it was—the national bird. The bald eagle is indigenous to North America.

Stunning photos show lava erupting from Hawaii's Kilauea volcano

HONOLULU (AP)—One of the world's most active volcanoes spewed lava into the air for a second straight day on Tuesday. The eruption of Kilauea volcano on Hawaii's Big Island has stayed within the mountain's summit caldera inside Hawaii Volcanoes National Park. No homes were threatened. Molten rock began shooting from the volcano before dawn on Monday when fissures opened in the caldera floor and propelled lava 295 feet (90 meters) into the air. The red liquid formed tall fountains and then spread across 650 acres (263 hectares). The Hawaiian Volcano Observatory estimated the lava was about 1 yard (1 meter) thick. Scientists expect activity to fluctuate in the coming days. The lava paused Monday afternoon but fountains reemerged Tuesday morning. The eruption occurred in an area that's been closed to the public since 2007 due to hazards including crater wall instability and rockfalls. Visitors to the park were able to watch the foundations at a distance from an overlook spot. This eruption is the sixth in Kilauea's summit caldera since 2020. Hawaii Volcanoes National Park encompasses the summits of two of the world's most active volcanoes: Kilauea and Mauna Loa. Kilauea also erupted in June and September.

World

Bethlehem marks second subdued Christmas Eve during war in Gaza

BETHLEHEM, West Bank (AP)—Bethlehem marked another somber Christmas Eve on Tuesday in the traditional birthplace of Jesus under the shadow of war in Gaza.

The excitement and cheer that typically descends on the West Bank during Christmas week were nowhere to be found. The festive lights and giant tree that normally decorate Manger Square were missing, as were the throngs of foreign tourists that usually fill the square.

Palestinian scouts marched silently through the streets, a departure from their usual raucous brass marching band. Security forces arranged barriers near the Church of the Nativity, built atop the spot where Jesus is believed to have been born.

The cancellation of Christmas festivities is a severe blow to the town's economy. Tourism accounts for an estimated 70% of Bethlehem's income—almost all from the Christmas season.

Latin Patriarch Pierbattista Pizzaballa, the top Roman Catholic cleric in the Holy Land, noted the shuttered shops and empty streets and expressed hope that next year would be better.

"This has to be the last Christmas that is so sad," he told hundreds of people gathered in Manger Square, where normally tens of thousands would congregate.

Pizzaballa held a special pre-Christmas Mass in the Church of the Holy Family in Gaza City. Several Palestinian Christians told the Associated Press that they have been displaced in the church since the war began in October of last year with barely enough food and water.

"We hope by next year at the same day we'd be able to celebrate Christmas at our homes and go to Bethlehem," said Najla Tarazi, a displaced woman who prayed for the war to end. "We don't feel happy."

Bethlehem is an important center in the history of Christianity, but Christians make up only a small percentage of the roughly 14 million people spread across the Holy Land. There are about 182,000 in Israel, 50,000 in the West Bank and Jerusalem and 1,300 in Gaza, according to the U.S. State Department.

The number of visitors to the town plunged from a pre-COVID high of around 2 million per year in 2019 to fewer than 100,000 in 2024, said Jiries Qumsiyeh, the spokesperson for the Palestinian Tourism Ministry.

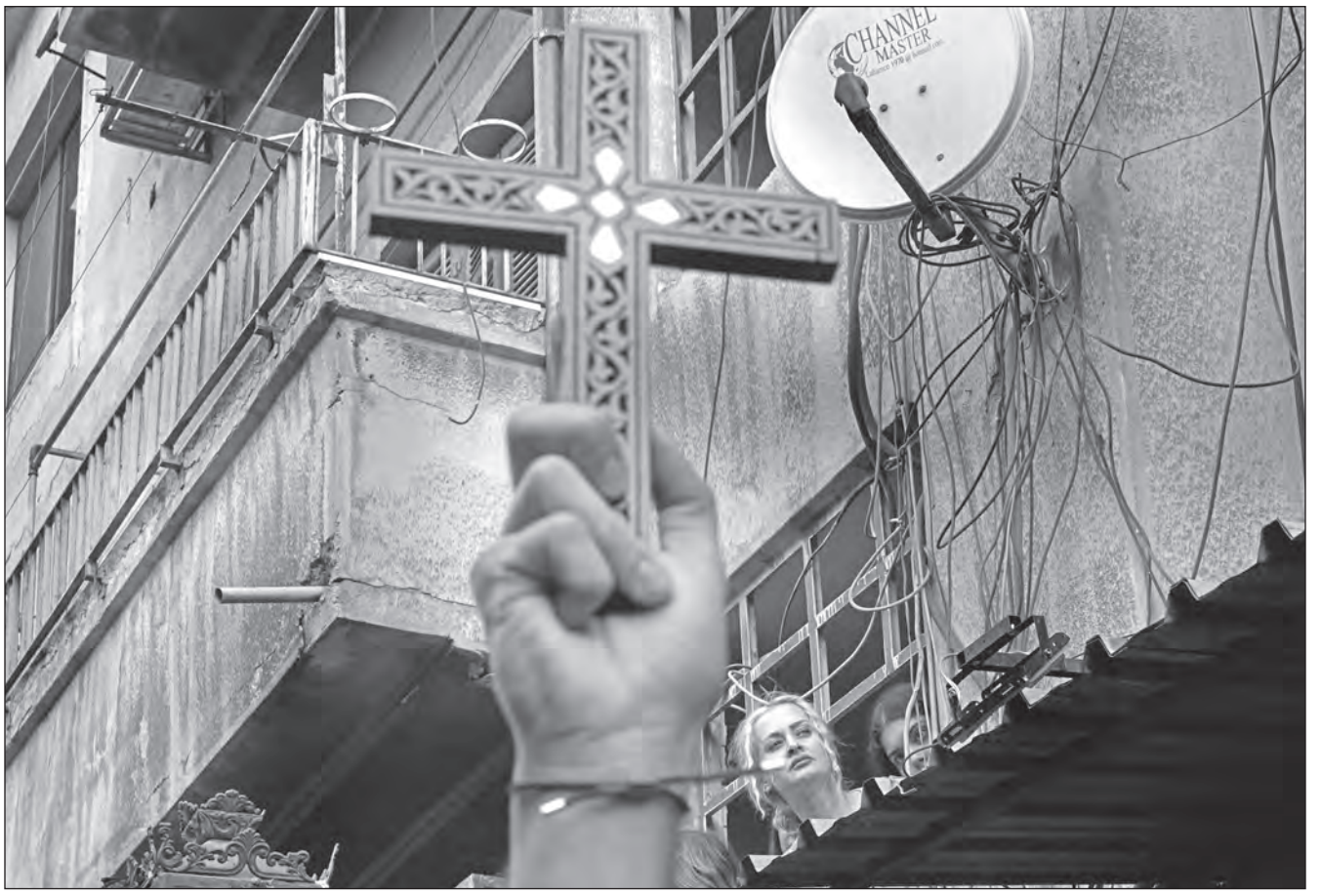
After nightfall, the golden walls of the Church of the Nativity were illuminated as a few dozen people quietly milled about. A young boy stood holding a pile of balloons for sale, but gave up because there were no customers to buy them.

A surge of violence in the West Bank, where more than 800 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire and dozens of Israelis have been killed in militant attacks, has stalled tourism. Palestinian officials do not provide a breakdown of how many of the deceased are civilians and how many are fighters.

Since the deadly Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas attack that sparked the war, access to and from Bethlehem and other towns in the West Bank has been difficult, with long lines of motorists waiting to pass through Israeli military checkpoints. The restrictions have prevented some 150,000 Palestinians from leaving the territory to work in Israel, causing the Israeli economy to contract by 25%.

In the Oct. 7 assault on southern Israel, Hamas-led militants killed about 1,200 people, most of them civilians, and took more than 250 Israeli hostages. Israeli officials believe that around 100 hostages remain in captivity in the Gaza Strip.

Elsewhere, worshippers found connection despite difficult times.



AP

A woman looks at Syrian Christians carrying crosses and shouting slogans in Damascus, Syria, Tuesday, Dec. 24, 2024, during a protest after a Christmas tree was set on fire in Hamah city on Sunday.

AP

Nuns walk along the Church of the Nativity, traditionally believed to be the birthplace of Jesus, on Christmas Eve, in the West Bank city of Bethlehem, Tuesday, Dec. 24, 2024.

Tourists flock to Paris for Mass at reopened Notre Dame Cathedral

Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris celebrated its first Christmas Eve Masses since a devastating fire ravaged the medieval landmark in 2019.

About 2,000 people joined an afternoon Mass—one of four held on Tuesday—including worshippers and other visitors marveling at the restoration of the recently reopened cathedral. Some American tourists in Paris crafted their trip to ensure they could attend Christmas Eve services at Notre Dame.

"They did such an amazing job," said visitor Aly Beinert. "It looks beautiful. It blew us away."

The Paris Archbishop symbolically reopened Notre Dame's grand wooden doors on Dec. 7 with three resounding knocks, with guests including President-elect Donald Trump, U.S. first lady Jill Biden, Britain's Prince William and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

Syrians come together for rare moment of joy

In Saydnaya, Syria, a large crowd gathered near a historic monastery on Christmas Eve to witness the lighting of a towering tree adorned with glowing green lights.

The celebration offered a rare moment of joy in a city scarred by over a decade of war and its infamous prison, where tens of thousands were held. Families and friends stood beneath the illuminated tree—some wearing Santa hats, others watching from rooftops—while a band played festive music and fireworks lit up the sky.

"This year is different—there's happiness, victory and a new birth for Syria and a new birth for Christ," said Houssam Saadeh, one attendee. Another, Joseph Khabbaz, expressed hope for unity across all sects and religions in Syria, dismissing recent Christmas tree vandalism as "isolated incidents."

Heavy snow hits the Balkans

A snowstorm in the Balkans stranded drivers and downed power lines, but some saw the beauty in it.

"I'm actually glad its falling, especially because of Christmas," said Mirsad Jasarevic in Zenica, Bosnia. "We did not have snow for Christmas for 17 years here, and now is the time for wonderful white Christmas."

Travel woes and family reunions in the United States

American Airlines briefly grounded flights across the U.S. on Tuesday due to a technical problem just as the Christmas travel season kicked into overdrive. Winter weather threatened more potential problems for those planning to fly or drive.

In Virginia, hundreds of sailors and their loved ones got an early Christmas present when the USS Cole docked at its home port in Norfolk, Virginia, after seven months at sea. Families bundled in coats and blankets, shed tears of gratitude and held signs bearing the sailors' names and photos.

Volunteers in Colorado Springs, Colorado, answered calls Tuesday from curious children inquiring about Santa's location. At least 100,000 kids call into the North American Aerospace Defense Command each year to track Santa's whereabouts. NORAD's beloved Santa tracking tradition has endured since the Cold War, when a Colorado newspaper mistakenly printed a phone number for Santa that connected kids to the joint U.S. and Canadian defense command.

Spanish ministries bring seafarers holiday cheer

In the port of Barcelona, Spain, volunteers from the faith-based ministry Stella Maris visited seven ships docked there on Christmas Eve to deliver Nativity scenes and the local specialty of turrón (nougat candy) to seafarers.

The volunteers met seafarers from India, the Philippines, Turkey and elsewhere, said Ricard Rodríguez-Martos, a Catholic deacon and former merchant marine captain who leads Stella Maris in this major Mediterranean harbor.

Life & Style

Elaborate holiday light displays making spirits bright in big way

CONCORD, N.H. (AP)—Tiny tots with their eyes all aglow might be enough to brighten some homes this holiday season. But others are adorned with thousands of blinking lights synched to blasting music, drawing crowds and bolstering both holiday and community spirit.

In a cul-de-sac in Mesa, Arizona, 14 homeowners have been going all-out on holiday lights for the last 30 years in a tradition that hasn't been diminished by real estate turnover.

Those buying homes in the neighborhood often find the attics full of décor left behind as a gift from the previous owners, and despite cultural and religious differences, residents come together to create a festival of lights, Stephanie Castillo Price said.

AP

Resident Bryan Cobb puts the finishing touches on the lights on his house for the Wakefield Winter Wonderland lighted street in Santa Clarita, Calif. on Dec. 17, 2024.

"Everybody has been able to take their interpretation of the holidays and put it into a full circle," she said. "There's not somebody that's going to walk down the street and not feel included."

In Santa Clarita, California, residents of Wakefield Court decided to coordinate their holiday light displays as a way to bring some joy to their community after an earthquake. Now in its 30th year, the Wakefield Winter Wonderland includes inflatable figures and wooden cutouts of a variety of characters, from Mickey Mouse to Homer Simpson.

Bryan Cobb admits he initially was against buying a home in the neighborhood when he and his wife first viewed it.

"She started crying and said, 'But this is the Christmas street! I want to live there!'" he said. "She got her way. We live here, we love it. All the neighbors bond together."

In Edmond, Oklahoma, those looking to the western sky will easily spot the Miranda family's elaborate holiday light display featuring images and music from the movie "Wicked." Spotlights reminiscent of movie studio lights shoot up from the roof, while a singing witch's face takes shape across a towering tree.

"It just seemed like the perfect fit with a light show because you can really do the drama with the lights," said Elisabeth Miranda, who handles the programming while her husband, Mark, tackles installation. "It takes a very long time to set up. Every single bulb has a spot, a place, a number, so that when we program it, it does exactly what it needs to do at the right time."

The family started putting up holiday lights in 2015 and saw a surge in traffic after being featured on ABC's "The Great Christmas Light Fight." While most neighbors have been supportive, a few complaints prompted the couple to take a few years off before returning with a better plan to limit viewing hours and control traffic.

This year, they are collecting donations for the Oklahoma Fraternal Order of Police.

End of 'Rust' criminal case against Alec Baldwin may unlock civil lawsuit

SANTA FE, N.M. (AP)—The conclusion of a criminal case against Alec Baldwin in the fatal shooting of a cinematographer clears the way for a related civil lawsuit by relatives of the deceased woman and efforts to depose the actor under oath, attorneys for plaintiffs in the civil suit said Tuesday.

At a news conference in Los Angeles, victims' rights attorney Gloria Allred said that the parents and younger sister of deceased cinematographer Halyna Hutchins were disappointed that prosecutors won't appeal the dismissal of an involuntary manslaughter charge against Baldwin. The criminal charge against Baldwin was dismissed halfway through trial in July on allegations that police and prosecutors withheld evidence from the defense.

Hutchins died shortly after being wounded during a rehearsal in the movie "Rust" in October 2021 at a film-set ranch on the outskirts of Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Baldwin, the lead actor and coproducer, was pointing a pistol at Hutchins when it discharged, killing Hutchins and wounding director Joel Souza. Baldwin has said he pulled back the hammer—but not the trigger—and the revolver fired.

Allred said Hutchins' relatives are determined to pursue damages and compensation from Baldwin and "Rust" producers in New Mexico civil court, and want Baldwin to answer questions under oath in the proceedings. Hutchins' widower and son previously reached a separate legal settlement.

"With the withdrawal that was made public yesterday, we are now able to proceed with our civil case," Allred said. "Clearly, the rights of Alec Baldwin were protected, but the due process rights of the victims—Halyna Hutchins and her parents and her sister—were violated."

Allred said she's ready to prove that Hutchins had a close relationship with her parents and sister—a prerequisite for seeking civil damages.

In November court filings in the civil lawsuit, Baldwin denied allegations that he was negligent or at fault in the shooting of Hutchins and sought to suspend the case. Attorneys for Baldwin could not immediately be reached Tuesday.

Allred read a statement from Hutchins' sister, Svetlana Zemko, that said, "Mr. Baldwin must be held accountable."

In April, a judge sentenced movie weapons supervisor Hannah Gutierrez-Reed to the maximum of 1 1/2 years at a state penitentiary on an involuntary manslaughter conviction in Hutchins' death.

Allred condemned New Mexico Attorney General Raúl Torrez for declining to appeal the dismissal of the criminal charge against Baldwin, calling him "the Grinch who stole Christmas" at the Christmas Eve news conference.

Torrez spokesperson Lauren Rodriguez defended the decision in an email, citing "significant procedural irregularities" identified by the judge in the criminal case.

Christopher Nolan's next film is based on 'The Odyssey'

By LINDSEY BAHR
AP Film Writer

Christopher Nolan is following his Oscar-winning "Oppenheimer" with a true epic: Homer's "The Odyssey." It will open in theaters on July 17, 2026, Universal Pictures said Monday.

Details remain scarce, but the studio teased that it will be a "mythic action epic shot across the world using brand new IMAX technology." It will also be the first time that an adaptation of Homer's saga will play on IMAX film screens.

Nolan has been an IMAX enthusiast for years, going back to "The Dark Knight," and has made his last three films exclusively using large format film and the highest resolution film cameras. For "Oppenheimer," the first black-and-white IMAX film stock was developed. Nolan hasn't said specifically what the new technology for "The Odyssey" will be, but earlier this month he told The Associated Press that they're in an intensive testing phase with IMAX to prepare for the new production.

"They have an incredible engineering staff, really brilliant minds doing extraordinary work," Nolan said. "It's wonderful to see innovation in the celluloid film arena still happening and happening at the highest level possible."

"The Odyssey" will be Nolan's second collaboration with Universal Pictures following "Oppenheimer," which earned nearly $1 billion at the box office and won the filmmaker his first Oscars, including for best director and best picture. Rumors about his next project have been swirling ever since, with near-daily speculations about plot—none of which turned out to be true—and casting. While there are many reports about actors joining the ensemble, none has been officially confirmed by the studio.

Friend's romance sits on a foundation of bad choices

DEAR ABBY: I think the world of "Celia," my best friend of 25 years. She has been there for me through many major ups and downs in my life. She is beautiful inside and out, well-educated and works hard.

Celia has been in a five-year relationship with an old friend I'll call "Vince." I think he is a nice guy, but not for her. He has no desire to do better in life, doesn't provide for her and lives off her money. Vince barely works, and his time is spent out and about enjoying himself while Celia works two, sometimes three, jobs.

Now Celia's physical health is suffering, and so is her mental health. Vince has a kid who sometimes stays over, and when they run out of money, Celia asks me to help cover them. She sees nothing wrong in this and wants to have a child of her own with him.

I have had many talks with Celia, but they go nowhere. I've helped with money a few times and she always pays me back. But recently, after she asked me for money for food for the three of them, I learned they went to the movies instead. Now I feel used. This is just not OK. I no longer want to give her money to cover a grown man's responsibility. I'm not sure how to tell her I can no longer help out with money.

STRAINED FRIENDSHIP

DEAR STRAINED: Celia may be well-educated, but it appears she has serious self-esteem issues, little common sense and a parasite for a boyfriend. That she would consider having a child with Vince, a man who can't support himself or the child he already has, is coconuts! Tell your beautiful friend that while you care for her, you will no longer subsidize the three of them, and using your money to pay for movie tickets was the last straw. Then don't relent.

■■■

DEAR ABBY: I taught tennis lessons at a private club for 41 years. Then came the pandemic. I was furloughed and not asked to return to work. I wasn't given the usual parting acknowledgement that previous employees received -- no goodbyes, no thank yous.

In the successive years, I have asked for a free membership as a gift for my years of service. So far, the answer is "no." Is my request valid? Should I continue asking?

SERVING FAIRNESS IN ILLINOIS

DEAR SERVING: You didn't mention how many times you have asked for the membership as a gift for your years of service, but if it has been more than once, stop asking because it isn't going to happen. A furlough is defined as a temporary layoff for a specified period of time. Employees retain their jobs and benefits but do not get paid during that period. If this is what your separation from that private club was called, it may be time to speak to an attorney about how you were treated.

■■■

For everything you need to know about wedding planning, order "How to Have a Lovely Wedding." Send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby, Wedding Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

DEAR ABBY

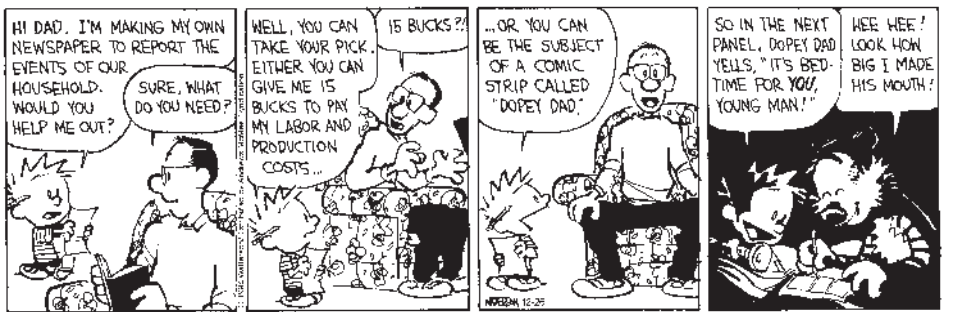
BY ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Pastimes

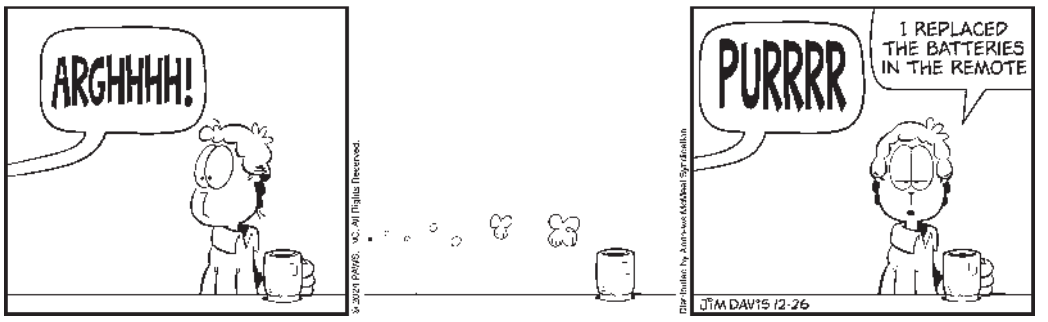
Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson


HI DAD. I'M MAKING MY OWN NEWSPAPER TO REPORT THE EVENTS OF OUR HOUSEHOLD. WOULD YOU HELP ME OUT?
SURE, WHAT DO YOU NEED?
WELL, YOU CAN TAKE YOUR PICK. EITHER YOU CAN GIVE ME 15 BUCKS TO PAY MY LABOR AND PRODUCTION COSTS...
15 BUCKS?!
...OR YOU CAN BE THE SUBJECT OF A COMIC STRIP CALLED "DOPEY DAD."
SO IN THE NEXT PANEL, DOPEY DAD YELLS, "IT'S BED-TIME FOR YOU, YOUNG MAN!"
HEE HEE! LOOK HOW BIG I MADE HIS MOUTH!

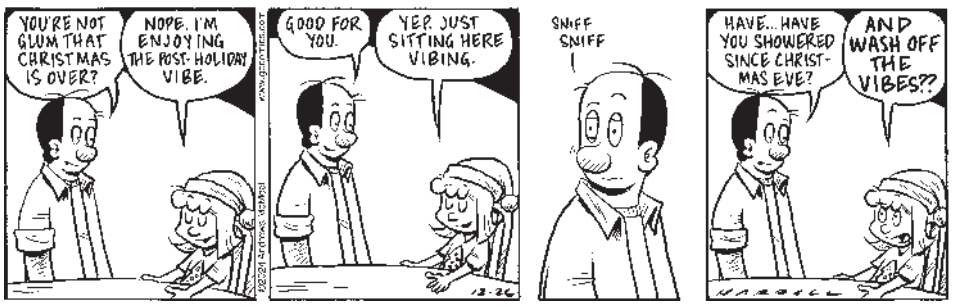
Garfield®

By Jim Davis



Adam@home

By Bryan Basset


YOU'RE NOT GLUM THAT CHRISTMAS IS OVER?
NOPE. I'M ENJOYING THE POST-HOLIDAY VIBE.
GOOD FOR YOU.
YEP. JUST SITTING HERE VIBING.
SNIFF SNIFF
HAVE...HAVE YOU SHOWERED SINCE CHRISTMAS EVE?
AND WASH OFF THE VIBES??

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy

I THINK I'M GOING TO CANCEL MY MEMBERSHIP
HOW COME?
I'VE BEEN WORKING OUT FOR MONTHS AND I STILL CAN'T BENCH PRESS MY BODY WEIGHT.
WHY DON'T YOU TRY OUR PERSONAL TRAINER?
I DON'T KNOW. HOW MUCH DOES HE WEIGH?

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

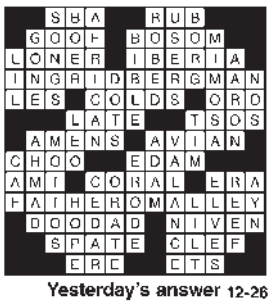
ACROSS

1 Pack cargo
5 Aleppo's land (Abbr.)
8 Winter Palace denizen
12 Sister of Rachel
13 Runner Sebastian
14 Film lioness
15 — Romeo
16 Scepter
17 Tide type
18 Mortar partner
20 Language of Pakistan
22 TV anchor, for one
26 Columbus' birthplace
29 Rent out
30 Haw preceder
31 Oodles
32 "Way cool!"
33 Honeycomb unit
34 LBJ's successor
35 AAA job
36 Full of foam
37 Mail center authority
40 Not that
41 Aches (for)
45 "Industry" actor El-Masry
47 Prof's aides
49 Work hard
50 Valentine border
51 Green prefix
52 Hotel chain
53 Seize
54 Cozy family room
55 500 sheets

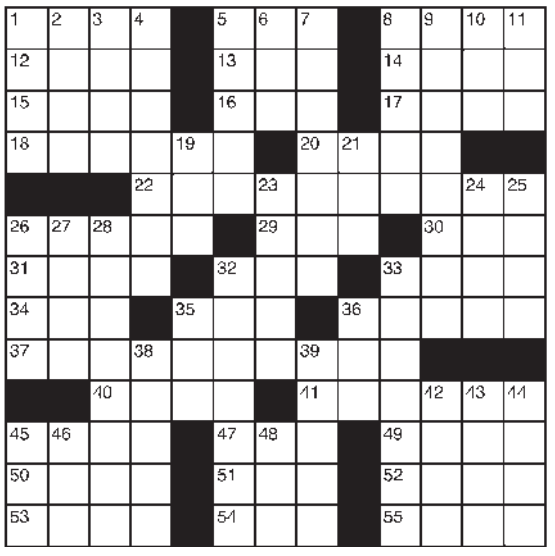
DOWN

1 Duel prompter
2 Far (Pref.)
3 Klutzes
4 Unspecified things
5 Threaded hardware
6 "— -hoo!"
7 Lowered
8 Looks after
9 Emulated Sherlock
10 Solid-rock insert
11 LL Cool J's music
19 Tony-winner Salonga
21 Dumpster critter
23 Cabbage salads
24 "Electric" creatures
25 Depend (on)
26 John Irving protagonist
27 Sailor's saint
28 Like easy-to-clean pans
32 Honored at the Friars Club
33 Museum VIP
35 Texter's "Enough!"
36 "Get it?"
38 Afternoon hour
39 Actress Cicely
42 The Eternal City
43 Singer Simone
44 Slender
45 Flight stat
46 Goat's cry
48 Perfect serve

Solution time: 24 mins.



Yesterday's answer 12-26



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Chris Daughtry, 45; Jared Leto, 53; Ozzie Smith, 70; John Walsh, 79.

Happy Birthday: You are sitting in a better position than you realize. Refuse to limit what you can do or wait for things to come to you. Embrace your dreams, hopes and wishes, and focus on what excites and brings you joy. Now is the time to put your best foot forward and capture what life offers. Follow your heart and pursue the road leading to progress and fulfillment, not regret. Your numbers are 7, 13, 21, 26, 32, 39, 45.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19):* Interacting with others will broaden your horizons. Social events that expose you to something or someone new and exciting will get you thinking about what you want to pursue. Not everyone will agree with the choices you make. Listen to reason and do what's best for you. ✪✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20):* Avoid jumping to conclusions or acting before you have all the facts. Sort through differences using observation, direct questions and listening to explanations. Anger won't solve problems, but common sense and logic will help you get your facts straight. Choose peace and love over discord and chaos. ✪✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20):* Spend time pampering yourself and doing whatever makes you happy. Refuse to let anyone bring you down, play emotional mind games, or use manipulative tactics to pressure you to do what they want instead of looking out for your best interest. Rise above negativity and those trying to dismantle your confidence. ✪✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22):* Take care of matters that require attention before the year ends. Align yourself with people who share your likes and dislikes, and do your part to make a difference in your community. Your input will lead to opportunities and encourage others to pitch in and help. ✪✪✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22):* Take the initiative to get things done. Idle time will result in frustration. Speak up, reach out and do your best to participate in events and activities that connect you with people who share your concerns. Mixing money and love will have its disadvantages. Keep your money separate to avoid conflicts. ✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22):* Keep tabs on what you eat and drink. Excessive behavior will cost you mentally, physically and financially. Size up your relationships with others to determine who is a good or bad influence. Say no to temptation and goodbye to those who drag you down. Good choices lead to a good life. ✪✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22):* Put more effort into making your space user-friendly. Decluttering will make you feel good about yourself and how you live. Traveling, watching documentaries and communicating with people who are already doing what you want to pursue will uplift and point you in the right direction. ✪✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21):* Put your energy to good use. If someone challenges you, be smart and refuse to get into a no-win situation when you can use your time and skills better. Discipline and patience are your ticket to success. Let go of what's not working for you and gravitate toward what is. ✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21):* A steady pace will get you where you want to go and lead to opportunities you least expect. Promote what you have to offer, and you'll find a way to use your skills in new and exciting ways. It's time to morph into the future, meshing new ideas with techniques. ✪✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19):* Divvy up what you want to keep and what you want to discard. Take a walk down memory lane, and you'll discover what's missing from your life. Realizing that you can rectify a situation you conveniently put aside will make your life choices more accessible. Live for today. ✪✪✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18):* Worry less about what others do and focus more on your goal. A change at home that adds to your convenience and comfort will also spark your imagination and encourage you to spin something you enjoy doing into a profitable adventure. Love is in the stars, but so are misunderstandings. ✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20):* Be careful what you say. Someone will twist your words to make you look bad. Have your facts in order, and only share with those you trust. Invest more time or money in personal growth, good health and looking your best. A change to how you handle money will pay off. ✪✪✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are dedicated, helpful and liberating. You are intuitive and enlightening.

✪: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ✪✪: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ✪✪✪: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ✪✪✪✪: Aim high; start new projects. ✪✪✪✪✪: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

1	8				5			3
	6			8		4		7
			6				9	
8		5			9			4
				2	8		6	
	9		3		4		7	
		2		5		7		
9	7			4	6	3		
				3			4	

Difficulty: ★★★ 12/26

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Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer

6	3	5	9	4	7	1	8	2
7	2	9	8	1	3	4	5	6
1	4	8	6	5	2	7	3	9
9	6	7	3	8	4	2	1	5
3	8	1	5	2	9	6	7	4
4	5	2	1	7	6	8	9	3
8	7	4	2	3	5	9	6	1
2	9	3	7	6	1	5	4	8
5	1	6	4	9	8	3	2	7

Difficulty: ★★★ 12/25

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the **WONDERWORD.**

THANKFUL FOR CORN Solution: 4 letters

E	C	U	A	S	A	L	A	D	E	T	S	A	O	R
Z	X	H	O	M	I	N	Y	Y	G	R	E	N	E	G
I	P	T	E	L	A	R	E	G	N	I	G	F	L	R
A	L	R	R	W	L	E	N	R	E	K	A	U	I	I
M	S	E	E	A	I	J	A	M	S	W	T	(F)	C	T
E	G	P	M	S	C	N	E	S	O	E	(U)	O	O	S
S	N	I	C	A	E	T	G	L	N	(E)	L	Y	R	E
I	I	C	A	H	R	R	L	G	(L)	A	P	R	I	K
A	S	E	K	B	I	A	V	A	U	Y	C	E	C	A
N	S	R	E	L	M	P	C	E	E	M	O	K	E	L
N	E	E	L	H	I	E	S	S	S	M	B	A	S	F
O	R	E	S	P	U	D	D	I	N	G	N	B	L	N
Y	D	R	I	S	W	E	E	T	E	N	E	R	I	R
A	A	T	N	E	L	O	P	O	L	I	S	H	O	O
M	A	R	M	A	L	A	D	E	E	I	K	O	O	C

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Bakery, Beer, Cake, Caramel, Chewing Gum, Chips, Cob, Cola, Cookie, Cornflakes, Cornmeal, Dressings, Energy, Extract, Fuel, Ginger Ale, Gluten, Grilled, Grits, Hominy, Jams, Jelly, Kernel, Licorice, Maize, Marmalade, Marshmallow, Mayonnaise, Oils, Pita, Polenta, Polish, Preserves, Pudding, Recipe, Roasted, Salad, Sauce, Snack, Sweetener, Wafer

Yesterday's Answer: Guests

For **WONDERWORD** apps, books & more, visit Wonderword.com, or call 1-855-232-2367.

Packers clinch playoff berth with shutout win over Saints

GREEN BAY, Wis. (AP)—With a dominant defense leading the way, the Green Bay Packers clinched a playoff berth by producing their most lopsided win in a decade.

Josh Jacobs gained 107 yards from scrimmage and scored a touchdown for a sixth straight game as the Packers recorded the first shutout of the NFL season, 34-0 over the hapless New Orleans Saints on Monday night.

"Obviously the goal is Super Bowl," said quarterback Jordan Love, who went 16 of 28 for 182 yards and a touchdown. "That's the first step right here, to make the playoffs. Obviously this was a big-time game, to clinch that spot. I'm proud of the way we came out there and handled business."

Green Bay (11-4) secured its fifth postseason appearance in six years with its first shutout since beating Seattle 17-0 on Nov. 14, 2021. The Saints (5-10) were blanked for the first time since falling 13-0 to San Francisco on Nov. 27, 2022.

New Orleans played without injured quarterback Derek Carr and running back Alvin Kamara. Rookie Spencer Rattler started at quarterback and went 15 of 30 for 153 yards with an interception and a fumble.

"We dressed the 48 guys that we dressed," Saints interim coach Darren Rizzi said. "We're not going to make excuses. You guys know me well enough by now. I'm not going to make excuses about that. We didn't perform well enough."

Green Bay's margin of victory was its largest since a 55-14 blowout of the Chicago Bears on Nov. 9, 2014.

"A shutout in the NFL is the hardest thing to do, and to do it on prime time is even harder," Packers cornerback Keisean Nixon said. "To clinch a playoff berth doing that is a hell of a deal."

The Packers have won nine of their last 11 games, with their only losses during that stretch coming to the NFC North rival Detroit Lions. They will enter the playoffs as a wild card after being eliminated from NFC North title contention Sunday.

AP

Green Bay Packers wide receiver Jayden Reed (11) is pushed out of bounds near the goal line by New Orleans Saints cornerback Will Harris (5) and linebacker Pete Werner (20) during the first half of an NFL football game, Monday, Dec. 23, 2024, in Green Bay, Wis.

Jacobs ran for 69 yards and a 2-yard touchdown on 13 carries to lead Green Bay's 188-yard rushing attack. He also caught four passes for 38 yards.

Chris Brooks and Emanuel Wilson had 1-yard touchdown runs, Dontayvion Wicks had a 2-yard TD catch, and Brandon McManus kicked field goals from 55 and 46 yards.

Green Bay's defense made it a miserable night for Rattler while missing four starters because of injuries: linebacker and leading tackler Quay Walker, cornerback Jaire Alexander and safeties Evan Williams and Javon Bullard. Safety Zayne Anderson had an interception in his first career start.

"What's really cool is we're getting contributions from a lot of different people," Packers coach Matt LaFleur said. "I think that's usually the mark of a good team."

The Packers scored touchdowns on each of their first three possessions.

Love found Wicks on third-and-goal to cap the game's opening drive. Wicks' touchdown was his fifth of the season and first since Oct. 20 against Houston.

Jacobs' touchdown capped a 17-play, 96-yard drive that lasted 8:55. It was the Packers' longest possession of the season in terms of plays and time. The Packers also had a 96-yard march in their 24-19 triumph over the Los Angeles Rams.

The drive included two fourth-down conversions. Love had a 2-yard sneak on fourth-and-1 from the New Orleans 45 to open the second quarter. Love then threw a 14-yard completion to Tucker Kraft on fourth-and-2 from the 35.

Jacobs has rushed for a touchdown in six straight games, putting him one away from the longest such streak in Packers history. Paul Hornung had a touchdown run in seven consecutive games in 1960.

Brooks' first career touchdown made it 21-0 with 6:28 left in the second quarter. McManus kicked both of his field goals in the second half.

Wilson capped the scoring with 2:41 left on a drive engineered by backup quarterback Malik Willis.

"We finally put a complete game together," Jacobs said. "That's something that we've been hunting since the beginning of the season. It just feels like our ceiling just keeps going up."

Players have mixed feelings about being on the road on Christmas as NFL adds more holiday games

OWINGS MILLS, Md. (AP)—Asked if there was any special meaning to playing on Christmas for a second straight season, Lamar Jackson paused for several seconds before answering.

That said it all.

"I mean, it is," he finally replied, trying to be diplomatic. "That means we're good, but at the same time, I do want to celebrate at home sometimes with my family now. I don't want to be playing on Christmas all the time — not all the time."

That sentiment seemed common among the Baltimore Ravens players this week as they prepared for their second consecutive Christmas road game. Jackson and his teammates will face the Houston Texans on Wednesday. Earlier in the day, the Kansas City Chiefs play at Pittsburgh.

Games on Christmas aren't new to the NFL. The Miami Dolphins famously beat the Chiefs in a playoff game on Dec. 25, 1971 — a double-overtime classic that still holds the record for the NFL's longest game.

In 2020, New Orleans running back Alvin Kamara tied an NFL record with six touchdowns in a game when the Saints beat Minnesota on Christmas.

Lately, however, the league has been much more aggressive about scheduling games on Christmas. There were three last year on a Monday, and this week there are two. The four teams in action this Wednesday all played this past Saturday, giving them a little more time to prepare. But each is still wrapping up a stretch of three games in 11 games.

And for Baltimore and Kansas City—the teams spending the holiday on the road—this means a bit of a scramble to find time to celebrate with loved ones.

"Santa hasn't come yet, but as far as my family, we traded gifts (over the weekend)," Kansas City quarterback Patrick Mahomes said. "(His wife) Brittany's a champ because I'm not there to help build the toys my family got, and the kids have opened up every single one of them."

The Chiefs are playing on Christmas for a second year in a row, although they were at home last season.

Baltimore tackle Ronnie Stanley said there is an offensive line Christmas party planned for Friday at center Tyler Linderbaum's house. Jackson's plan is to celebrate on Thursday.

"I already celebrated Christmas with my family this past week," Ravens safety Kyle Hamilton said. "It's more about the thought of calling people Christmas morning and just going out there and being able to go out in front of my whole family and do what I love. That's how I'll celebrate."

The Ravens also have celebrated a bit as a group already.

"We actually had a team dinner last night here, which was really neat. And our chefs were incredible (with) what they put out there, so that was fun," coach John Harbaugh said Monday. "And we are going to have the ability for family members from the Houston area to come over for the team snack after we do a walk-through (Tuesday) night."

Don't expect Christmas games to go away any time soon. Netflix agreed to a three-year contract in May to carry Christmas Day games. Playing on the holiday certainly gives teams a chance to be in the spotlight, although the Chiefs and Ravens already get plenty of that.

The Ravens-Texans game features a halftime performance by Beyoncé.

"Wasn't there a time when somebody was out peeking outside the locker room door during the Super Bowl or something like that? Was there some story on that?" Harbaugh said. "He got in trouble for it? There will be big trouble. I like Beyoncé, though. I can't say I'm a huge Beyoncé fan, but I think I like her."

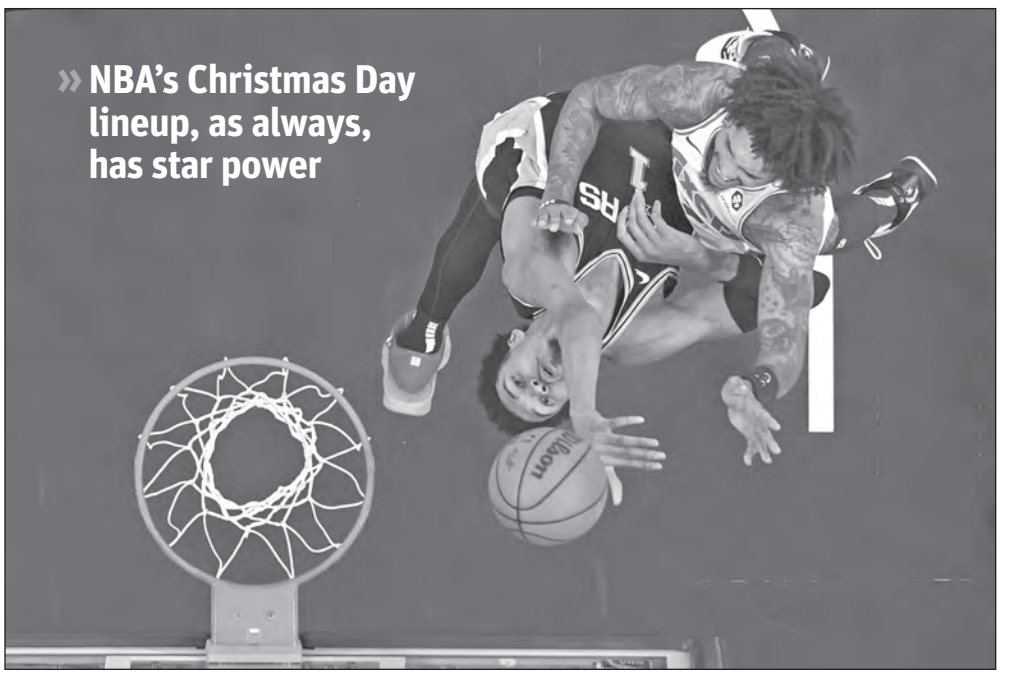
(Harbaugh was referring to Bengals kicker Evan McPherson during the Super Bowl in 2022 when he watched Dr. Dre, Snoop Dogg, Eminem, Mary J. Blige and Kendrick Lamar perform at halftime in Los Angeles.)

Jackson, seemingly unaware of Harbaugh's attempt to lay down the law about the halftime show, arrived at the microphone immediately after the coach.

"I'm going to go out there and watch," the star quarterback said. "First time seeing Beyoncé perform, and it's at our game—that's dope. I'm going to go out and watch. Sorry Harbaugh, sorry fellas."

Wemby at The Garden and LeBron vs. Steph

By TIM REYNOLDS
AP Basketball Writer



AP

Philadelphia 76ers' Kelly Oubre Jr., right, goes up for a shot against San Antonio Spurs' Victor Wembanyama during the second half of an NBA basketball game, Monday, Dec. 23, 2024, in Philadelphia.

LeBron James made his Christmas debut in 2003. Victor Wembanyama was born 10 days later.

That's right: James has been featured on the NBA's big day for longer than Wembanyama has been alive. And on Wednesday—when the league celebrates Christmas with games for the 77th time—the league's oldest player and brightest young star will be big parts of the holiday showcase.

It's another Christmas quintupleheader, with Wembanyama and the San Antonio Spurs visiting the New York Knicks, Minnesota going to Dallas for a Western Conference finals rematch, Philadelphia heading to Boston to renew a storied rivalry, James and the Los Angeles Lakers taking on Stephen Curry and the Golden State Warriors, and Denver playing at Phoenix in the nightcap.

"Very excited, of course," Wembanyama said, the French star previewing his first Christmas game opportunity. "First of all, spending Christmas in New York, it's going to be like the movies, I hope. Get a little snow."

His first Christmas wish came true: Light snow fell in Manhattan on Tuesday morning.

James said he's relishing another chance to share the holiday spotlight with Curry—someone he's played against on Christmas three previous times.

"Any time you get an opportunity to be on the court and compete against one of the greatest to ever play this game, you don't take it for granted," James—who turns 40 next week—said of facing his U.S. Olympic teammate. "I don't know how many more opportunities we'll get to go against each other."

The Christmas games have been looked at for decades as the time when more fans tend to start watching basketball. The NFL—which is going head-to-head against the NBA on Wednesday—is seeing its regular season winding down, and the five NBA games will all be shown nationally either on ABC or ESPN.

The Spurs-Knicks game will also have a special altcast starring Mickey Mouse and some of his friends, the first animated presentation of an NBA game. It'll be shown on ESPN2 and stream on Disney+ and ESPN+.

"I wish there were more of our great players who had a chance to play on that stage on Christmas Day," NBA Commissioner Adam Silver said. "It's been an interesting turnaround from certainly my earlier days in the league when we got a lot of complaints about playing on Christmas—and now it comes the other way, which is, 'Why aren't we playing on Christmas?' I wish we could accommodate even more teams."

Wemby's debut: Spurs at Knicks, Noon ET

Knicks forward Josh Hart, like just about everyone in the basketball world, raves about Wembanyama. The Spurs star is averaging 24.8 points, 9.9 rebounds, 4.0 blocks, 3.9 assists and 3.3 3-pointers per game.

"He's an amazing player, man," Hart said. "He does things offensively, defensively that no one that's 7-whatever-the-heck-he-is should be doing. He's the future of the league."

For the record, Wembanyama is officially just under 7-foot-4.

The Knicks are playing their 57th Christmas game, extending their NBA record. The first Christmas game in league history was at Madison Square Garden in 1947.

"Been fortunate to play on Christmas a lot of days," Spurs guard Chris Paul said. "I'm excited."

West rematch: Timberwolves at Mavericks, 2:30 p.m. ET

Game time is 1:30 p.m. in Dallas, and that means it'll be 8:30 p.m. in Ljubljana, Slovenia. Prime time, Christmas night in Luka Doncic's homeland.

The Mavericks star couldn't be happier how that worked out.

"It's special," said Doncic, who had a 50-point game on Christmas last year. "You have a lot of people from Europe want to watch the NBA. ... It's a big thing. It's going to be a special game."

Dallas beat Minnesota 4-1 in last year's West finals.

For Timberwolves guard Mike Conley, this is season No. 18—and his second Christmas game.

"It was 14 years before I got to play on it in Utah," Conley said. "I looked forward to the opportunity. Not many people get the opportunity to play. When people are celebrating the holidays, they turn on the TV and are watching the NBA."

The rivalry renewed: 76ers at Celtics, 5 p.m. ET

No teams have faced off against one another more in NBA history than defending champion Boston and Philadelphia. Same goes for Christmas rivalries: It'll be Celtics-76ers for the 14th time on Dec. 25, by far the most in the league.

Celtics guard Jrue Holiday says it's tough to interrupt family time on Christmas—but also said it's fun that his children can watch their father play that day.

"It's an honor to be able to play on Christmas Day," Holiday said. "I know I was one of the kids that couldn't wait for Christmas games to come on. So, it's always an honor."

LeBron vs. Steph: Lakers at Warriors, 8 p.m. ET

Curry and James have met on Christmas in 2015, 2016 and 2018, all immediately following seasons that ended with Cleveland vs. Golden State matchups in the NBA Finals.

Lakers coach JJ Redick played on Christmas 11 times in his career. The significance of seeing another Steph vs. LeBron matchup on the holiday isn't lost on him.

"I think it was great to have two of the icons of this generation go head-to-head and have one, for sure, classic series and then just also some classic games and classic moments," Redick said. "For those guys also being teammates on the Olympic stage, they just have the ultimate respect for each other."

James gets another chance to become the NBA's all-time Christmas win leader: He's played in 10 wins on Dec. 25, tying former teammate Dwyane Wade's holiday record. This is James' 19th Christmas game; Wade played in 13.

Curry, if he starts, will be the seventh person in NBA history with at least 11 starts on Dec. 25, joining James, Kobe Bryant, Shaquille O'Neal, Wade, Russell Westbrook and Kevin Durant.

"Christmas spirit hopefully can bring some gifts our way with a win," Curry said.

The finale: Nuggets at Suns, 10:30 p.m. ET

Durant will play on Christmas for the 12th time, and only James, Bryant and Oscar Robertson have more points on Dec. 25 than he does.

It's a rematch of a 117-90 win by Denver on Monday night.

"Looking forward to this next game," Durant said.

The Nuggets know the Suns will want to avenge losing by 27, plus that the holiday brings out the best in players.

"Hopefully we can go into their spot on Christmas and get another win," Nuggets forward Michael Porter Jr. said. "But I'm sure it'll be a tougher game."

Leaving Thunder, Bucks off N Christmas game list has those teams feeling snubbed

By TIM REYNOLDS
AP Basketball Writer

Oklahoma City leads the Western Conference and has a MVP candidate in Shai Gilgeous-Alexander. Milwaukee has the NBA's leading scorer in Giannis Antetokounmpo. They were the teams that made their way to the NBA Cup final.

By any measure, they're both very good teams.

And neither will play on Christmas Day this year. Bah, humbug.

In its defense, the NBA faces the same challenge every summer, figuring out which 10 teams will get the honor—and it is an honor—of playing on Christmas Day.

The Knicks and Lakers almost always find their way onto the slate, which makes sense given the size of the New York and Los Angeles media markets. The teams coming off runs to the NBA Finals typically get a Christmas invite, so hello, Boston and Dallas. The rest is a mix of stars, ratings potential, storylines and, hopefully, good teams.

Victor Wembanyama—the French star who already is a massive draw both in the U.S. and Europe—makes his Christmas debut when San Antonio goes to New York. Minnesota plays Dallas in a West finals rematch. Boston plays Philadelphia, a forever rivalry. The Lakers play Golden State, LeBron James vs. Stephen Curry. And Denver plays Phoenix in the nightcap. Nobody could have said those games were Christmas mistakes when the schedule came out.

It's also a sign of the parity in the NBA right now—there are clearly more than 10 teams worthy of Christmas consideration. That said, the Thunder and Bucks certainly have the right to feel snubbed.

"We should've had a Christmas day game, I believe, but the NBA felt different," Bucks guard Khris Middleton said on media day, back in September. "That's how they feel. I said my opinion on it. And sometimes it happens, sometimes it doesn't."

The Thunder not getting picked is puzzling, especially after being the No. 1 seed in the West last season.

This is the 17th consecutive season of the NBA having five games on Christmas Day. More often than not—75% of the time—the No. 1 seeds for the East and West playoffs have been picked for a Christmas game the following season. And entering this year, each of the previous 11 No. 1 seeds in the West playoffs wound up having a game on Dec. 25 that same year.

But not the Thunder.

"Disappointed, for sure," Gilgeous-Alexander said. "I'd love to play on Christmas Day. And I think we're that caliber of team. The NBA makes their decisions. Can't slight them for it. Ball's in our court to prove to them why we deserve to be in that game."

There have been reasons for some of the eight No. 1 seeds who got snubbed in that span to get snubbed. Some examples.

■ Cleveland was the East's No. 1 seed in 2010. LeBron James left Cleveland that summer and went to Miami, and the Cavaliers became a far-less-marketable team overnight so putting them on the Christmas schedule wouldn't have made much sense.

■ Indiana was the East's No. 1 seed in 2014. Paul George got hurt badly while playing for USA Basketball that summer and the Pacers weren't the same the following the season, which the schedule-makers probably realized could happen.

■ Toronto was the East's No. 1 seed in 2018. Toronto didn't make the Christmas list a few months later for the simple reason that the Raptors are from Canada, and Canadian viewers don't count in American television ratings. (The then-reigning NBA champion Raptors made the Christmas lineup in 2019.)

None of those situations would apply to the Thunder.

Oklahoma City is a small market, sure. Only Memphis and New Orleans are smaller among NBA cities in the U.S., according to Nielsen. It's easy to deduce that national ratings play a part in the decision of who plays on Christmas and who doesn't, but it's also clear that those who just want to see good ball on Dec. 25 probably would have tuned in for a Thunder game.

"They make the schedule. We play it," Thunder coach Mark Daigneault said. "Our players, I know, would have liked to play on Christmas because that's such a staple day in the NBA season. But we can't control that. All we can control is playing the schedule we're given, playing the hand we're dealt."

Dodgers top MLB luxury tax at $103M as record 9 teams owe penalty

NEW YORK (AP) — The Los Angeles Dodgers topped a record nine teams owing Major League Baseball's luxury tax this year with an unprecedented $103 million penalty, and the $97.1 million bill for the New York Mets raises their tax total under high-spending owner Steve Cohen to nearly $229 million.

The World Series champion Dodgers will pay a tax for the fourth year in a row. The Dodgers' tax payroll of $353 million included $1,032,454 in non-cash compensation for Shohei Ohtani, whose contract calls for use of a suite for games at Dodger Stadium and an interpreter.

The Yankees owe $62.5 million, according to figures finalized Friday by Major League Baseball and the players' association and obtained by The Associated Press. They were followed by Philadelphia ($14.4 million), Atlanta ($14 million), Texas ($10.8 million), Houston ($6.5 million), San Francisco ($2.4 million) and the Chicago Cubs ($570,000).

The total tax of $311.3 million topped the previous high of $209.8 million last year, when eight teams paid. Tax money is due to MLB by Jan. 21.

More than $1 billion in taxes have been collected since the penalty started in 2003, with 15 teams paying $1.23 billion. The Yankees lead at $452 million, followed by the Dodgers at $350 million and the Mets.

AP

Los Angeles Dodgers' Shohei Ohtani celebrates in the locker room after their win against the New York Yankees in Game 5 to win the baseball World Series, Thursday, Oct. 31, 2024, in New York.

Toronto, with a series of summer trades, cut its tax payroll to $233.9 million, under the $237 million threshold. The Blue Jays started the season projected at $244.3 million.

Chicago went just over the threshold at $239.85 million.

The Mets dropped their luxury tax payroll from last year's record $374.7 million to $347.7 million and cut their tax from last year's then-record $100.8 million. The Dodgers, Mets and Yankees ($316.2 million) were the only teams exceeding the fourth threshold, added in the 2022 labor contract and nicknamed the Cohen Tax in an initiative aimed at slowing his spending.

Among teams paying the tax, the Giants, Rangers and Cubs missed the playoffs.

Total spending on luxury tax payrolls rose 2.3% to $5.924 billion from $5.793 billion last year.

Tax payrolls are calculated by average annual values, including earned bonuses, for players on 40-man rosters along with just over $17 million per team for benefits and $1.67 million for each club's share of the $50 million pool for pre-arbitration players that started in 2022. Deferred salaries and deferred bonus payments are discounted to present-day values.

Because they owe tax for three straight years, the Mets, Dodgers, Yankees and Phillies pay at a 50% rate on the first $20 million above the $237 million threshold, a 62% rate on the next $20 million, a 95% rate on the amount from $277 million to $297 million and a 110% amount above that.

The Braves and Rangers owe tax for the second year in a row and pay 30% on the first $20 million over and 42% on the next $20 million.

THEODORE

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The 18-year-old ran to first place in the 100m race with a time of 11.47 seconds. Second place was Simon Tang at 12.28 seconds; and third was Tony Camacho who clocked in at 12.71 seconds.

In the long jump event, Rodgers landed the farthest at 5.09m for first place. His brother Michael was second at 4.62m, and Kaide Benson took third place at 4.08m.

Rodgers said of his performances, "I'm very happy with my performance, since it's the first meet of the season."

As for the competition, he said, "The competition as a whole was great, being able to see other athletes on the island. It felt good winning both events and gave me confidence in my training."

Looking forward, he plans to compete in the 2025 Pacific Mini Games that will be held in Koror, Palau. "I am also training and hoping to be able to compete in World Athletics Indoor Championships Nanjing 2025 and the World Athletics Championships Tokyo 2025.

His main goal is to break the 11-second barrier in the 100m sprint.

In other results, Joel Phair was the lone sprinter in the men's 45 age group 100m sprint with a time of 14.13 seconds.

In the male open 200m sprint, Caleb Cui won first place with a time of 25.26 seconds. Right behind was Simon Tang at 25.51 seconds, and Tony Camacho was third with 226.29 seconds.

In the men's 45 age group of the 200m sprint, Phair was the lone runner again and clocked in at 29.82 seconds.

Greg Borja was also the lone runner in the men's 50 age group 200m sprint with a time of 32.40 seconds.

In the middle distance 800m men's open, Tang zoomed into first place at 2:21.57. Second was Jireh Wang who clocked in at 2:23.06.

NMA

Theodore Rodgers leaps high during a long jump attempt in the NMA Open Track and Field 2024 last Saturday at the Oleai Sports Complex.

Wang then claimed first place in the 1,500m men's open at 4:46.49. Second place went to Raffy Cai who clocked in with a time of 5:01.84; third place was Landon Taflinger who sprinted into the finish line at 5:03.12.

Chad Taflinger was the lone runner in the 1,500m men's 40 age group and clocked in at 5:54.31; while Phair was also the lone runner in the 1,500m men's 45 age group at 5:28.93.

As for the field events, Lyle Andrew won first place in the men's open discus throw with a distance of 31.26m; and second place was Jared Ayuyu with a throw of 26.20m.

Chris Zemple was the lone participant in the men's 30 age group discus throw and threw a distance of 26.57m; Phair threw a 19.29m discus in the men's 45 age group; Dan Joab recorded a 30.65m discus throw in the men's 50 age group; Kina Rangamar had a 25.87m throw in the women's open discus throw; and Maria Ornes threw a distance of 21.24m in the women's masters discus throw.

As for the javelin throws, Michael Rodgers won the men's open with a distance of 20.72m, while Nason Wessel was second with a distance of 18.02m.

Zemple was the lone thrower in the men's 30 age category with a throw of 27.47m; Phair recorded a 25.57m throw; Joab threw a distance of 30.28m; Tony Ichiuo in the men's 55 age group had a distance of 32.40m; and in the women's open, Maria Igitol threw a distance of 29.62m, while Rangamar threw 22.83m.

GUAM

From page 16

In the last edition of the Marianas Friendlies last April, the NMI men split the tourney against Guam with one win and one draw. Meanwhile, the NMI women's team lost one and ended the other in a draw.

This time around, the Guam men's team was out for revenge and it never tasted so sweet as they blew out the Blue Ayuyus, 8-0, in their final match last Sunday.

Yellow cards were given left and right, and one red card was even issued to Guam star striker Jason Cunliffe in the 28th minute. Before that, the match was already very heated and Guam got the better of NMI keeper Edward Arriola III as they attacked him relentlessly and scored in the seventh and 18th minute.

However, in the second half, the red team easily dismantled the blue team's defenses, shaking their confidence with back-to-back goals. Guam's Erwin Manibusan Jr. had two goals—one in the 47th and 61st minute—for a 4-0 game.

After some attempts at the goal by the NMI that came to naught, Guam still had the upper hand as their keeper kept his clean sheet. Meanwhile, Guam's Jason Gomez had a field day and scored one in the 70th and 72th minute for a commanding 6-0 lead.

Kristian Cruz and Michael Castaneda then wrapped up Guam's barrage of goals as NMI fell for the second time in front of their home crowd.

In their first match last Saturday, the Blue Ayuyus put up a valiant effort against the Matao but came up short, 1-2.

The NMI's Dev Bachani scored the lone goal in the 72nd minute, but were still behind by one goal as Guam's Shuntaro Suzuki and Castaneda already put up their two goals by the 60th minute. The Blue Ayuyus tried as they might to tie the game up, but Guam's keeper and defense held steadfast until the end.

The NMI team consisted of Anthony Bergancia, Leland Deleon Guerrero, Jireh Yobech, Paul Lizama, Dev Bachani, Markus Toves, Brian Lubao, Edward Arriola III, Ariel Narvaez Jr., Daniell Pablo, Nolan Ngewakl, Monico Claridades, Tyler Omelau, Anthony Austria, Andrew Sablan, Ronnel Ocanada, Tanapan Unsa, Akira Kadokura, Casey Chambers, and Mark Chavez.

The Guam team was made up of Morgan McKenna, Kai Pahl, Kyle Halehale, James Gomez, Marcus Lopez, Jason Cunliffe, Michael Castaneda, Sean Halehale, Erwin Manibusan Jr., Shuntaro Suzuki, Jacob Tovez, Gavin Baker, Kristian Cruz, Derrick Cruz, Nathan Sablan, Jordan Rosario, Nicolas Chargualaf, Isaiah Baza, and Jude Bischoff.

JORDAN

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quickly crumbled Gallardo and Odicta's defenses. However, Gallardo and Odicta kept pace until the end and managed to close the lead that Pangilinan and Azura held. The pair then attacked the net relentlessly which caused Gallardo and Odicta to stay rooted at 18 points for an 18-21 final.

Pangilinan and Azura then had an easier time in the second half as fatigue settled in for Gallardo and Odicta and a breakdown of communication led to a blowout, 21-12 final.

Pangilinan said that their finals match was "very intense. We just looked for our opponents' errors and tried to get every point we could… we're just very grateful to be able to still play at this level."

Their strategy in the finals, said Pangilinan, "was to pressure their opponents by making drops so that we could be on the offensive side and do our smashes."

As for this year's tournament, he said, "I liked this year's tournament. It's very fast—single elimination and very organized. The line judges and everybody who helped volunteer, thank you."

With the performances of the players and the youth this year, Pangilinan said that "the future of the NMI is going to be up there. They're giving us hard games and hopefully we see more youth on our level so that they can prepare for the next Pacific Games in 2027."

Gallardo then teamed up with Trizian Canoza to secure the open mixed doubles championship over Odicta and U17 singles champion Shaina Malonzo, 21-10, 21-20.

Sharing the spotlight in the open division were Lina Tsukagoshi and Malonzo then claimed the open women's doubles title over Janelle Pangilinan and Hannah Choi, 16-21, 21-15, 21-20.

Sean Dizon won the men's singles open title against Kyle Salcedo, 21-16, 21-14; and Arisa Custodio, beat Ulrica Wang, 21-11, 21-17, for the open women's singles championship.

As for the masters 45+ division, Yoko Borja and Sun Ja Kim won the round-robin format in the women's doubles with three wins. Second went to Malou Malasarte and Marlene Perga with two wins and one loss; in the men's doubles, Patrick Fernandez and Tony Huang had an undefeated record of three wins for first place. Second was Son Jae Ok and Cris Hillario with two wins and one loss.

Packers clinch playoff berth with shutout win over Saints

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LEIGH GASES

The NMI's Brian Lubao, right, tries to keep pace with a Guam player as he attempts an attack at the goal during their last match up in the 2024 Marianas Friendlies last Sunday at the NMI Soccer Training Center in Koblerville.

LEIGH GASES

The NMI's Daniell Pablo, right, gets tangled up in the struggle for possession against a Guam player during their last match up in the 2024 Marianas Friendlies last Sunday at the NMI Soccer Training Center in Koblerville.

Guam wipes out NMI in Marianas Friendlies

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

The Guam National Football Team put their best foot forward and wiped out the NMI National Football Team in their home turf last weekend in the 2024 Marianas Friendlies tournament at the NMI Soccer Training Center in Koblerville.

It was a friendly tournament, but it had all the intensity of a high-stakes competition as both teams clashed fiercely, leaving everything on the pitch in pursuit of bragging rights.

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LEIGH GASES

The NMI's Ronnel Ocanada, right, attempts to take the loose ball from a Guam player during their last match up in the 2024 Marianas Friendlies last Sunday at the NMI Soccer Training Center in Koblerville.

LEIGH GASES

The NMI's keeper Edward Arriola III, center, falls to the ground during an attempt to block the goal during their last match up in the 2024 Marianas Friendlies last Sunday at the NMI Soccer Training Center in Koblerville.

Jordan, Jomarie take home open doubles title

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

Men's doubles partners Jordan Pangilinan and Jomarie Azura are open doubles champions in the NMI National Badminton Championships 2024 held last weekend at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

They previously teamed up and won the doubles championships in the Tan-Holdings Badminton Open 2024 last March.

This time, their chemistry and unmatched dynamics led to their title over Lance Gallardo and Dave Odicta in two sets last Saturday.

Unforced errors were the name of the game for Pangilinan and Azura as they

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LEIGH GASES

Men's open doubles champions Jordan Pangilinan and Jomarie Azura pose with their gold medals during the awards ceremony of the NMI National Badminton Championships 2024 at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium last Saturday.

LEIGH GASES

Participants of the NMI National Badminton Championships 2024 pose for a group photo during the awards ceremony of the NMI National Badminton Championships 2024 at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium last Saturday.

Theodore Rodgers bags 100m and long jump gold

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

Theodore Rodgers sprinted and jumped his way to gold in the 100m and long jump events of the NMA Open Track and Field 2024 last Saturday at the Oleai Sports Complex.

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NMA

Gold medalist in the 100m men's open, Theodore Rodgers, center poses with silver medalist Simon Tang, right, and bronze medalist Tony Camacho during the awarding of the NMA Open Track and Field 2024 last Saturday at the Oleai Sports Complex.